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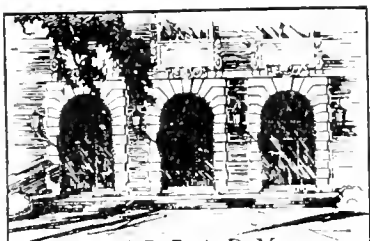
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NETHERTON-ON-SEA.

A Story.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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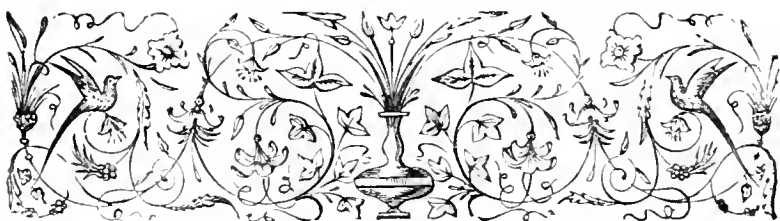
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NETHERTON-ON-SEA.



CHAPTER I.

LUCY BYTHESEA.

SPRING has changed into summer, and Emmy is still at the Rectory. But her life there has been very different since her talk with Pak in the cave. He had infused some of his energy, ambition, and buoyancy into her; and she worked hard now to make herself worthy of him, in whose future greatness she implicitly believed.

She had seldom seen him since, Mrs. B. very rarely allowing her to go out

alone. But, as has been said, the young lovers had hardly expected another such interview, and therefore went on working away eagerly, with thoughts in the far future.

Another circumstance contributed not a little to Emmy's happiness and progress. Mrs. Bythesea, finding her inquiring mind rather difficult to satisfy, had handed her over in great measure to her husband. The Rector was a man of refined and cultivated taste, and possessed an excellent library. Here Emmy generally spent her mornings, reading pretty much at will, but always called to account at the end of the time for the way in which she had spent it, the good Rector giving up an hour of his favourite theological reading to examine his young pupil in her morning's work. Saturday was always devoted to poetry, which both teacher and pupil

thoroughly enjoyed. The “wells of English undefiled” were, one after another, drawn from; and the Rector was not one of those gentlemen of taste who think they uphold ancient English poetry by despising modern.

After a few months of this tuition, Emmy could have matched Pak in quoting from *Locksley Hall* or *In Memoriam*. To the tutor himself these mornings were a real treat. Ever since his college days he had had no one to enter into his mental enjoyments. Early in life he had made the fatal mistake of taking to himself an uncongenial partner. He had fallen captive at first sight to her stately beauty—had idealised her, and dreamed of her, until at last he won her; since when he had by degrees found out that a thing of beauty is not necessarily a joy for ever.

Our readers must not form too low an opinion of Mrs. Bythesea. She was a good wife and woman in many ways ; but she understood neither her husband nor the rest of the world. In fact, she never laid herself out to do so, and was therefore continually treading on his and everybody's toes. She, poor woman, was the greatest loser, as she kept all love at a distance. Even her only son, on whom she doted, rather endured than loved her. She had tried to bring him up, too, by rule, and, as the sure result, had turned out thereby a creature to whom rule was unknown. "Justice first, then mercy," she fancied was her maxim, and thought it a very grand one ; and, like all who lead sham lives on sham principles, she produced all the evil of the maxim without any of the good.

Emmy was the first who broke through

this icy barrier. She, with her quick intuition, divined Mrs. B.'s character—guessed at the repressed love that lay beneath, and, in her pitiful heart, felt all the more affection for her because she obtained so little of that love without which Emmy felt she herself could not live. So the girl *would* be demonstrative to her chilly benefactress, *would* pay her all sorts of kind attentions, and try by every means in her power to thaw the iceberg.

And in truth her sunny smiles did penetrate further, perhaps, than she knew. A change had come over the Rectory altogether with the presence of this little sunbeam. The Rector would be tempted out to play croquet on the gay lawn; and merry laughs resounded around the old precinct, waking up the jackdaws in the overshadowing tower to add their discordant voices; while Bones ran wildly

after the balls, and barked pertly when his mistress scolded him for his bad manners. Then Emmy would coax Mrs. B. to bring her book out on the lawn, and even essayed to make her play too.

It was on one of these bright afternoons that a fine old gentleman, with military step and bearing, and a hearty, good-tempered face, walked up to the Rectory-door. By his side was a piquant-looking young lady, somewhat like her father, with his laughing blue eyes and healthy complexion. Instead of his broad face and white locks, she had a pretty oval face, and an abundance of light wavy hair, on the top of which was perched a little knowing hat. Everything about her might be pronounced faultless in taste.

Lucy Bythesea touched her father's arm as he was about to ring the bell,

saying, "Stay a moment, papa ; just listen to those unusual sounds. I actually hear a ringing laugh, and my uncle echoing it !" And then stepping back, she added : "Do peep through the laurels ! only think of the Rector running after his croquet-ball, and shaking his mallet at that little beauty, and Madame sitting smiling at the players, actually forgetful of the wickedness of all her neighbours ! A change has come over the spirit of our Rectory dream with a vengeance !" she added, laughing.

"The fairies must have been at work here," said her father, looking over her shoulder ; "and I expect that little creature is their queen, who has waved her wand over the place. Let us go to them."

"By all means," answered the girl ; "only"—with a shrug of her shoulders—"I protest against clouding over this bright

scene, and all for nothing. The sight of a wicked ghoul like me will break all the spell of poor Aunt Kate's gaiety, and send down the corners of her mouth at the corruption of human nature."

Notwithstanding which pert rejoinder, the two proceeded to the lawn.

They received a hearty welcome from the Rector, and a stately one from his dame, who felt that she must put on extra dignity, to make amends for her husband being surprised in so unclerical a position.

The two girls were introduced, and kept giving sly sidelong glances at each other, as would-be friends are apt to do before the first barrier is past.

Emmy felt rather over-matched by Lucy's easy gaiety of manner and elegance of dress. She thought how queer she herself must look in her old-fashioned

black silk, made out of one of Mrs. B.'s cast-offs, and with her hair all tumbling about her shoulders, disarranged by her vigorous play.

Meantime Lucy, for her part, could scarcely take her gaze off Emmy. She had an artistic eye, and was fascinated by the sweet face and pretty slight figure, set off all the more by the quaint costume. The "pose" was broken by Mrs. Bythesea telling Emmy to take Lucy to her room to prepare for dinner, to which the pair had consented to stay. Emmy, with a duty thus thrown upon her, tried hard to cast off her shyness. But it must be remembered, that though one of Nature's ladies, and on the high-road to add art to nature, she was but a carpenter's daughter, and had much yet to learn before she gained ease of manner, that most difficult of all acquirements for those by whom it has to

be acquired. Fortunately for Emmy, her way to this was smoothed by her being one of those who unconsciously perceive and appropriate what is worthy of imitation in others.

On the present occasion she mustered courage to make some apology for her little chamber on entering it.

“I wish my room were a prettier one to show you into,” she said.

Lucy glanced around it critically.

“O, I see what you mean,” she replied, with a loud merry laugh. “Aunt Kate’s taste isn’t irreproachable as to colour; but you have done your best to hide this yellow paper with these pretty pictures; and I’m sure this white-and-pink table-drapery is not Aunt Kate’s handiwork; she would abjure such things as poms and vanities.”

“Well,” said Emmy, smiling, “the table was such an ugly green that it used to

make me quite cross. I asked Aunt Kate, as she bids me call her, for something to cover it with, so she sent me to get something, and I bought the pink lining and muslin, and made the cover."

"What a clever little seamstress!" cried Lucy, in her pretty, patronising manner. "And here are your books: I suppose you're very clever—now I am a dunce; I can't fix my thoughts on lessons when the sun is shining, and the birds singing, and my dear little bay pawing the stable pavement longing for me to mount."

Then, with a sudden change to a mock-serious tone, "Of course you've heard from my precious Aunt Kate what a wicked, despicable creature I am?"

"No, indeed, she only said you were dreadfully spoilt, and had had no mother to care for you," said Emmy, with a tremor in her voice. The "far-away"

look was in the eyes again, and Lucy looked wonderingly at her new-found friend.

“Do you know,” said she at last, “a few minutes ago I felt older than you, and now I feel younger, for you seem to see things that I can’t see, and look as if you had had more experience than I have had, for all my gadding about.”

Emmy turned her large, loving eyes upon the motherless girl, and said: “I was feeling so sad for you, never to have known a mother. I can’t think what I should have done without mine. And though she’s gone now, I seem to feel her near me, and know what she would say about things when I’m in doubt or difficulty.”

There was silence for a minute or two, and then Lucy came up and kissed Emmy, and said: “We are going to be great

friends, you know ; but I expect you will be shocked sometimes at my wild, wilful ways, so I want you always to remember that I never knew a mother,—mine died when I was born,—and then you will bear with me, and not give me up for a black sheep, as Aunt Kate does.”

So the barrier was broken down, and Emmy made a secret resolve to love Lucy, whatever her aunt might say. “And if she does call you a black sheep,” said Emmy gaily, as they left the room, “I shall tell her that, if *you* are one, they are just the sort of sheep that I like.”

The girls had a long walk and talk in the garden after dinner. It was an era in both their lives. Emmy, from her mother’s anxious watching over her, had mixed very little with companions of her own age ; and Lucy had been from childhood her father’s constant companion.

For this reason she had generally shrunk from the society of girls, feeling shy when among them. So this friendship sprung up between the two just when both needed it, and it had a permanent influence on the character of each.

While the younger ones were getting better acquainted in the garden, the elders were settling matters for them indoors, lingering over the strawberries and wine. The Colonel was delighted to get a companion for his daughter, and would have himself taken Emmy with pleasure, but both the Rector and his wife peremptorily refused to give her up. So it was finally arranged that she was to spend her holidays at the Colonel's, and to take lessons with Lucy all the year round; and that they were to be as much with each other as they chose at all times. The Colonel declared that it was already

holiday weather, and that the lassie had better come to them at once. So, as Gerald was expected home for his long vacation in a week or two, Mrs. Bythesea consented to part with Emmy in a few days.

The Rector would have put his veto on this, had he not seen it to be for Emmy's good, saying that he should have liked her to stay for Gerald's holidays; that she would prevent the long, lazy fellow from doing nothing all day. Good, short-sighted Rector!

And now the little yellow-papered room was changed for a very beau-ideal of a maiden's sleeping-chamber. The Colonel and his daughter inhabited one of those charming Overton villas which, as before described, rose one above another on the grassy terraces of the southern cliff. The house faced the sea, and looked down

upon that well-known deep-embowered lane into which Emmy gazed longingly from her window on the afternoon of her arrival.

What a long, long time ago it seemed since that walk with Pak ! yet it really was little more than a year. "Ah, I was a child then," sighed the girl of fourteen, "and now I am a young lady, Aunt Kate says. Poor Bones!" she added, stroking a rough head that had pushed itself against her from a chair at her side, "you were a little misery when we found you that day, and you are getting one of Lucy's 'pampered aristocrats' now."

"What are you saying about me?" asked a merry voice at the door. "May I come in? Why, I declare you are a little witch, discussing your friends with your familiars in the solitude of your chamber."

“Here he is, then,” said Emmy, showing Bones’s grisly head. “I was just telling him he was one of your ‘pampered aristocrats,’ and reminding him of the day when he was a starveling, with nothing but hair and skin and his namesake, and scarcely a tail left to wag.—Dear old Bones! we won’t ever forget that day, will we?”

“You make one quite curious,” said Lucy. “Come now, tell me Bones’s history, in reward for my having given him such a nice mat at your door.”

And so Emmy told her all about that bright afternoon, and gave a glowing description of Pak’s rescue of Bones, the two girls kneeling meantime on the window-seat, resting their arms on the open sill, and gazing down on the blue sea, calm as a lake on this midsummer day. When she had finished, Lucy smilingly

congratulated her on her powers of description.

“There was something more than dry Bones to animate you in telling your tale, I’m sure,” said she, with a sly glance. “Who is this same valorous knight? I am beginning to be quite jealous of him.”

“He is the greatest friend I have in the world; and you must not expect me to love even you better than him. He comes first always,” she added, half to herself.

So Lucy saw how it was; and she fell a-thinking, and Emmy too, till the great gong warned them to prepare for dinner.

Then Emmy said, glancing round her pretty room, full of traces of Lucy’s handiwork, “It seems like a dream—too good to be true.”

“Wake up, lassies, if you’ve been dreaming,” said the Colonel’s hearty voice outside ; “and don’t let the fish get cold before you are ready to eat it.”





CHAPTER II.

THE LAWN AT OVERTON.

LUCY soon felt quite at home in her new quarters, and the genial influence of the place quickly told on her health and spirits. She had been a fragile little thing since her accident—a sort of fairy sprite, that you fancied might vanish while you gazed at it. But Lucy's merriment was contagious; and what with laughing, riding, walking, &c., the warm colour came into her cheeks, and stayed there. Her eyes were brighter than ever, and fuller of fire and frolic than they had been for many a day.

She grew tall, too ; and though she was always slight, there was more roundness about her face and figure than there had been since her childish days. For, poor girl, she had had a good deal to sadden and quiet her during the past year, — the dreadful fire, her mother's death, the hospital time ; and even the change to another station in life, with all its advantages, brought with it a shake out of old habits and thoughts that was a check to healthy growth, both of mind and body. Then, though she had learnt to be quietly happy at the Rectory, it had not been an enlivening sojourn. Then too, though she trusted her faithful knight implicitly, and honoured him for not breaking the spell of her new life by seeking her out, yet she was very like other maidens after all, and hungered after his companionship. A cheery talk with him

was the tonic she longed for in the dead-alive routine of the Rectory. And though outwardly she was bright enough, yet really there was a danger of her falling into a morbid lethargic state, just from want of proper stimulus.

But now all this was altered. The Colonel's genial good-temper, clever stories, and original sayings, found a ready response in Emmy's bright nature, and in her love of the humorous. The *ancien militaire* and the sensitive little girl were the best friends imaginable.

As for Lucy, since the revelation about Pak, the friendship had grown closer than ever. The two girls took drawing-lessons of Mr. Gilp, which were a great delight to both ; and often spent whole mornings on the cliff, trying their 'prentice hands on sea and sky.

Their master endeavoured to humble

them when he found it out, telling them it was absurd to muddle about with water-colours before they had learned to copy correctly.

But Miss Lucy loved her own way, and Emmy loved the cliffs ; so the sketching still continued.

On one of these occasions, early in the holidays, the two girls were sitting some little way apart, half-way down the cliff, under the shadow of a small projecting spur, which sheltered them from the morning sun. They were trying, presumptuous young things, to “treat” the fine outline of the northern cliff, softened as it was by a silvery haze, which brooded over sky and sea. It cannot be said that they were succeeding well in rendering the scene on paper ; but every faint marking of rock, and every soft bar of light in the mist, were passing into their minds,

and giving them hold on Nature and on truth.

They had heard no sound of footsteps on the springy turf; but suddenly a well-known voice spoke close at Emmy's ear :

"That softening mist is like someone I could mention, whose very presence has a charm for calming troubled waters."

"Are they troubled now?" said Emmy, looking lovingly up into the face bent over her. For, strange as it may seem, though this was a meeting she had often hungered after in vain, yet now it had come so unexpectedly, she was in no way flurried by it, but passed into its intense happiness almost as a matter of course.

His tone towards her was the old one, with perhaps this exception : that this gentle spontaneous way of taking possession of her was something new and delightful. So that the words, "Are they troubled

now?" sprung out of his remark almost of themselves.

"Well, yes," said he; "the same old story. I fancy, my darling, you will always hold your former office—a calmer of troubled waves."

"But there is always peace in the depths, and perhaps you haven't reached them yet."

And she looked up at him with her bright trustful face—a renewal of the parting gaze by that ebbing tide, which had long shone on him from the paths of memory.

Meantime Lucy had greeted Heckswy very cordially, as an old friend and victim. He had taught her French during their former stay at Overton; and it was already arranged that in the ensuing half-year both the girls were to take lessons of him in that and one other modern language. Thus they

were at the same time old friends and foes; for Lucy showed her liking by delighting to tease him, and to raise his ire by arguing against all his pet theories of equality, freedom, &c. This she did partly out of pure love of mischief, and partly to make him wax warm in defence of his dear oppressed Poland, on which theme he at the shortest notice sprung into eloquence, and inspired his pupil with like enthusiasm.

On the present occasion he asked leave to inspect Lucy's picture, and, after pondering a minute, said:

"Ah, Miss Lucy, it is like yourself—plenty of life, plenty of brightness; but, pardon me, no depth—no depth!" shaking his head.

Lucy laughed merrily, and called out to Emmy to come and defend her.

"Here, Emmy, I must introduce you to Mr. Heckswy," she said, "and make

you my champion against him. He declares I have no depth, but am as shallow as my poor sea. Is it a true bill?"

"No, no," said Emmy; and, turning to Heckswy, she added, "some people are so deep that it takes a long time to find them out. I know my friend better than she does her sea. Lucy, this is the deliverer of Bones, of whom I told you."

Lucy shook Pak warmly by the hand, with a smart little compliment about his rescue of the poor doggie.

"By the way, Emmy, how is Bones?" said he. "I had forgotten to inquire after his health; but I have often dreamt of the poor old fellow, and longed to get a sight of his rough coat."

"O, she spoils him dreadfully," said Lucy. "I assure you he is getting quite unbecomingly fat. I expect we shall soon have to carry him out to take the air. As

it is, he prefers sitting in the pony-carriage at our feet to running behind, as he used to do.—He at least has no wrongs to be redressed, Mr. Heckswy,” she added, with a saucy shake of the head.

“Ah, well,” he answered, with a shrug of the shoulders, “if the world were governed by young ladies, no doubt it would be all sugar-plums; but as it is, I am glad we have not another oppressed fellow-creature to mourn over.—But come, my lad, we must be off, if we are to make our expedition before dark.—We are thinking, ladies, of starting on a pedestrian tour for the rest of the holidays; and after that, I will wait on you for our French, and our Italian or German; which shall it be?”

The choice was referred to Emmy, who, with a glance at the fourth present, said, blushing :

“ I had rather learn Italian first, if you don't mind.”

“ First? Only listen to that !” cried Lucy. “ You will find your new pupil very ambitious, Mr. Heckswy, and much more brilliant than I am. I've been teaching her French these holidays, and she takes to it as if it were her mother-tongue. Don't you think so much quickness must be superficial ?” she said, with an arch look.

“ I won't trust my judgment, as it has been found wrong in another case,” he said ; “ but to guess by first impressions, I should say anything but superficial. Good-day, ladies !”

Pak grasped Emmy's hand, and there is no need to say the grip was returned. The eager choice of the language he loved had been a new pledge, if pledge were wanted.

“Go on and prosper, *carissima*,” he said; “I must work hard to keep ahead of you;” and turned away, lifting his hat to Lucy with his old merry smile.

And so the pedestrians trudged off, and the two girls seated themselves again, each absorbed in her own reflections. At last Lucy spoke :

“Mr. Heckswy knows me better than you do, Emmy,” she said sadly. “I am shallow, and I suppose always have been, though I never found it out till lately. He has a clear eye to find out the difference between us so quickly.”

“You are not shallow in heart, Lucy, I’m sure,” said her friend warmly. “If your father needed help, or I were in trouble, I know who would minister most devotedly. Don’t be discouraged. All as yet has been sunshine with you, and it’s the storm that tries us. On the surface is

frivolity, it is true ; and that's all that Mr. Heckswy sees. As to study, you may not satisfy him because you catch an idea so quickly that you don't care to work it out, but are tired of it by the time some would first have made its acquaintance. And thus, of course, your thoughts appear to him to be constantly wandering, and not to fix anywhere."

"Yes, it's just so ; I have no power of application. And that's one thing in which men certainly excel us : they can bring all their minds to bear on one point ; whereas we let ourselves be led off by all the stray thoughts that float about us."

"Maybe," said Emmy ; "but we have the advantage of them in another thing : if they can fix their thoughts, we can fix our hearts. No man can ever beat us in devotion and ministration to one object ; in fact, men hardly know what it is. They

are better bustlers, but we are better servers."

"Ah, you little philosopher!" said Lucy; "but for all that, I'd back your friend for both; what a fine, strong face he has—sail and ballast too, as my uncle's naval friend used to say, genius inspiring ability. But it's time to pack up our traps for luncheon."

So the paint-boxes were shut up, with the sketches not half done, and the two girls turned homewards.

As they drew near the garden-gate, they saw a tall young man coming down the drive towards them.

"My cousin Gerald, I believe!" cried Lucy; "the *bête noire* to whom we owe the pleasure of your sweet company. Doesn't he look a dangerous creature, with his handsome face and lavender kids?"

Emmy blushed crimson at this unwise

and untimely revelation of the reason why she had been sent from the Rectory. But Lucy would not let her escape ; so she had to be introduced to Mr. Gerald, and to submit to a rather supercilious bow from the young man.

He and Lucy chatted gaily about common friends as they strolled up to the house. Emmy's feelings were not of the pleasantest in the way ; and as soon as she possibly could, she escaped to her own room.

Poor child ! she felt very miserable. All the brightness of the morning, and all the peace and happiness, seemed clouded over. For the first time since her residence with her kind friends, she fully realised her state of dependence, and her spirit rebelled against it. Hot passionate tears rolled down her cheeks, as she thought indignantly of Gerald's superci-

lious bow, and of Lucy's unguarded hint.

The idea of its being possible that she should ever care about him ! As usual, comparison came in aid, and his scale kicked the beam as against that of another and far nobler. O, how she wished herself back again in Factory-lane with her mother and him, as in the dear old days !

The lunch-bell rang, and she had no time to calm herself ; but wiping away the tears, which were too passionate to leave traces behind, and smoothing back the curls, which somehow do get out of order whenever the feelings are upset, she walked downstairs with a slow and studied step, still sore at heart, and entered the room with a dignity quite new to her, — and, it must be added, far from becoming her.

There was plenty of cheerful talk about

Oxford, and boat-races, and Gerald's month in Switzerland, whence he had just returned. But Emmy did not join. She was conscious that the young man was leisurely surveying her while eating his luncheon and discussing his mountain excursions. So, though her cheeks glowed hotter and hotter, she would not raise her eyes, nor show any interest in what was being said.

When lunch was over, she flew off to the garden, and hid herself away in a favourite arbour, to consider what she should do, and how she should set to work to earn her livelihood.

She had not been there long, when she was aware of voices on the lawn near her place of refuge, and a knocking about of the croquet-balls. Then she heard Lucy cheerily calling for her aloud: "Emmy, come and play; we can't get on without

you.” But then came Gerald’s, to her, somewhat affected tones : “ By the way, Lucy, what a quixotic thing that was for my mother to do—adopting a poor child like that ; I thought the old lady had more sense ; such escapades never answer, you know. Besides, what right had they to do it without consulting me ? I’m to look on her as a sister, I suppose, to treat her as an equal, as you do ; but hang me if I choose to do that to any low-born *protégée* of my mother’s, though she may be pretty, and an orphan ! ”

“ Gerald,” exclaimed Lucy, “ how dare you speak so of my greatest friend ? At all events, if she’s raised up to be a lady, you’ve fallen beneath being a gentleman, speaking as you have done now.”

“ Highty-tighty, my fair coz ; so you have been fascinated too ! we shall have to try the little witch over red-hot coals ;

I'm afraid she'll be exercising her spells over me next."

Poor sensitive Emmy! she had heard it all from her leafy retreat; and now, pride and vexation overflowing her natural shyness and timidity, she stepped forth, and stood before the astonished Gerald, with her great eyes dilated, and cheeks glowing with indignation. Very beautiful she looked in her anger; even Lucy was struck by the change that had come over her gentle, clinging friend. She wanted none to lean on now; but spoke in a low, firm tone, turning her flashing eyes on Gerald.

"I heard all you said from the harbour yonder, and have come out to tell you so, and to bid you take my farewell to your father and mother; for I never will stand in anyone's way, nor will I stay where I am not wanted. I will go to a lodging in

Factory-lane, which is dearer to me than the Rectory or this, and work with these hands" (small white ones, as Gerald perceived) "for my daily bread."

So saying, the little lady swept away like a duchess, leaving Lucy bewildered, and Gerald not a little chagrined.

"Why didn't you tell me there was an harbour close by, Lucy?" he said. "I've been and put my foot in it now, with a vengeance. I had no idea my mother's *protégée* would turn out a proud little beauty like that! I declare it was the finest thing I've seen for a long time," he continued, trying to laugh it off. "You must go to her, Lucy, and try to make this up; there *would* be a rumpus at home, if she were really to keep her word."

"O, she mustn't," said Lucy in a tremulous voice; "I couldn't live without her; you don't know how we all love her,

Gerald. I shall hate you, if your rude words have sent her away. So go home, and say nothing about it, and I'll let you know to-morrow if I can persuade her to stay."

So Gerald, with his lavender-kids, went home crestfallen; and Lucy rushed up into Emmy's room, and besought her with tears to stay. At first she kept up the high indignant mood, and even repelled her bosom friend. But as time went on, and she got calmer, Lucy urged upon her the gratitude she owed them all, and how they all loved her as their own, and how she had never had the least reason to feel hurt till that conceited goose had given himself such airs.

"You must pity him, Emmy, and not mind him; he has had a bad bringing-up, poor fellow, and has lots of money; and so, what with that, and his

fine figure, and his gift of the gab, he thinks no end of himself. You must tolerate him, and bear with him, for my sake; for he is my only cousin, and we have always been friends, though I am continually scolding him and trying to put him down. Aunt Kate thinks I help to corrupt him, but papa says I do him more good than anybody else. So really, Emmy, it would be ridiculous to make us all miserable for what poor Gerald said."

There was truth and sense in Lucy's view of the question, Emmy could not but feel; and though she had thoroughly meant what she said, yet, now that she could look on things more soberly, she saw, what so many have seen under like circumstances, that it would be a wrong and foolish course to take; that it was a higher duty to break the resolve than to keep it; and that, let pride burst up and sting

as he would, pride must be broken down.

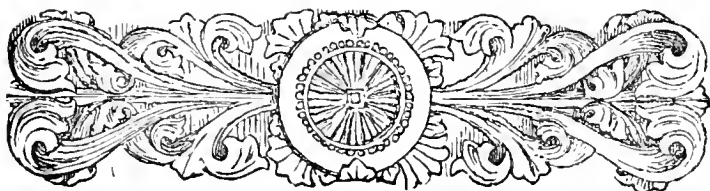
So she confessed to Lucy that she had spoken in anger, which she now repented of; and then told out all her soreness of feeling, and how that it had first arisen on that revelation of the reason of her being with them at Overton.

“ Ah, that was just like me, so foolish and thoughtless, dear Emmy; but in reality Aunt Kate was right, for Gerald would surely have fallen in love with you, if you had remained at the Rectory, and we wanted terribly to have you here. Thus Mr. Gerald was an ill wind that blew us a great deal of good.”

So things settled down happily again; for, seeing it in this light, Emmy got to blame herself alone for her outburst of anger. And the outburst itself was not thrown away. It had served to take the

measure of two people who had met for the first time ; and whatever might hereafter take place between them, there would at all events be no repetition of the scene on the lawn at Overton.





CHAPTER III.

THE CONFIDENCE.

IT was one of those hot damp summer afternoons, hardly known but in England, when sky and fields and trees seem saturated with genial warmth. There had been a thunder - shower in the morning, which had apparently only heated the air to prepare for a greater display at night. It had left the sky veiled with lines of thick white mist, behind which the sun was visible, dull indeed and magnified, but hardly lessened in power. Over this white veil were splashed irregular blotches of dark ragged cloud ; and here and there a strip of very faint

blue was seen, "uncertain whether cloud or clear."

It was the Saturday of the week before a late Whitsuntide. The midday school dinner was over; the cricket practice was languidly going on, making one hot to look at; the bathers were gone off to their accustomed field, a merry lot, with their towels tied round their hats, or floating from their hands loose in air; the Doctor, needing a drive and a chat, had accompanied his brother doctor in the phaeton, on visit to a patient far off;—when two figures were seen ascending the steep path that followed the edge of the north cliff, setting out, in spite of the clinging heat, for their half-holiday expedition. And that expedition was to be no short one. It was their purpose to track the cliff-edge to the next little bay of Hitherleigh, distant about seven miles. They would have some three

miles of the sort of walking with which they began ; then they must strike inland for about two more ; then they would surmount Hitherleigh Beacon, the highest cliff-head about these parts. A bathe on the Hitherleigh sands was in contemplation, and a walk home, perhaps as late as moonlight,—for the masters had on Saturday the privilege of taking out as many as three boys till 10 o'clock,—through the woods of Hitherleigh Combe, where, notwithstanding the vulgar idea about a certain disfavoured western county, nightingales had been heard during this present season.

To their left lay the sea, profoundly calm, dead asleep, in its long level lines of blue and white ; the great cliff-edge stood up between them and the lovely watery plain, rough with chinked and lichened stone, over the brow of which gathered the tufted

grass, lit up with veronica, and campion, and thrift. It seemed too hot for the sea-birds to ply their screamy maze around them; and wherever the path got a glimpse of the rocks below, they might be seen sitting in white rank and file on their crests. All was still, save what never can be still, — the restless spirits of men. Thoughts, and words the vehicles of thoughts, were rapidly passing between the travellers. At this particular moment they seemed in earnest accord. One was chief speaker—the other was listening delighted, and broke in ever and anon with words of enthusiastic sympathy.

It seemed to be, as usual, the wrongs of some oppressed nation over which Heckswy was waxing eloquent; and, to judge from his impassioned manner, that nation must have been his own. But after a mile or two, it appeared to come to this, that

in that particular quarter all was for the present hopeless ; that the spirit of that oppressed people, be it what it might, must be regarded as animating others, who had been alike under the yoke of the despot, but whose case was not alike desperate. This was a result to which the glorious truth of the brotherhood of nations led. And, again, every finger of help held out to a sister race would become an arm of strength as years went on, not only by the work actually done for liberty, but also by swelling the great wave of public sympathy with the crushed and suffering. Thus Hungary, Poland, Italy (and he added Ireland), were linked together in every good man's heart, however present party prejudice might hold captive his understanding ; and service done for one would tell to the account of all.

And then, after the pattern of the old

schoolboy theme, which always had its “Exemplum,” he began a series of narratives, which, although portions of them had been in Pak’s possession before, had never been detailed to him so fully and unreservedly.

It began with early boyhood — with school, and the thirst for science at school, mingled with the crushing tyranny of Russian rule in Poland; a revolutionary rising, ending in rout and massacre; father, mother,—alas, and here was the climax of the passion of the narrator—a little plaything sister,—cut down with the sword; an escape through fire,—“like your brave jump, my boy, but not into the arms of friends” — then days and nights, fleeing with a poor band, hourly thinning by weakness and by capture; then wandering, toiling, and starving; life on a Hungarian farm, and then in a Transylvanian school;

conscription into the Austrian service; then the great '48—desertion—flight into Italy—the war with Austria—the Roman triumvirate and Garibaldi—the French siege—renewed flight—even to the life in England which they were leading now.

“Well, and then?” said Pak.

“And then? why, what future for me but one? Do you think, my friend, that I, who have seen and suffered all this, can be intending to go on here among these excellent masters and boys? Doesn't the old horse neigh for the battle? And shall I, who am not yet five-and-thirty, settle down upon the lees of a blighted youth, contemplating the old age of a pedagogue? What future can there be, to come to practice, but in the direction of Italy? It can't be long before they wake up there; and as soon as I see a sign of life, I'm off!”

“Well, it’s a glorious course,” said his companion.

“Just what I want you to think. And pray, what have *you* before you?”

“Me ? O, who knows ? I don’t seem to fit in here ; yet I must never forget the Doctor’s kindness : half my being I owe to him.”

“And what do you suppose he intends for you ?”

“Can’t say ; but from hints he sometimes drops,—the scholarship, and Oxford, I suppose.”

“But what then ?”

“Well, that’s what I often ask myself. The Church, you know, is out of the question ; indeed, I fancy from what I read and hear, that I shall be stopped somewhere long before I get to that, for want of conventional faith.”

Heckswy bit his lip, and looked over

the cliff; and they walked in silence for some minutes. They were now just leaving the inland part of the way, and had again come to the edge, with the climb up to the Beacon before them. They took the hill with full vigour; but at the first little dip offering a landing-place in the rock staircase, Heckswy stopped, saying, "Now let us blow a bit." Then, casting himself down on the short grass, he said, "Pak, what do you take me for?"

"What do I take you for? Why, a right good fellow, and a patriot, and all that — Phocion, and Regulus, and Koskuskusko, and ever so many more swells, combined, to be sure."

"O yes, I know all that, of course; but that isn't what I meant. What do you suppose I am by way of religion?"

"Ah, there you puzzle me. Why, possibly a Mussulman—that is, for anything

you have ever shown me to the contrary."

"Well, that *is* severe. But at any rate it testifies to my success. If *you* don't know, at least I don't suppose anyone else does."

"O then, it's not plain? I'm rather sorry; as for myself, I go in for the Grand Lama, and that noble institution the praying-machine; and so, you know, we might have been neighbours."

"Now, my dear fellow, I'm not going to lecture you, but I do wish you'd try to be a little graver about such matters. You've plenty of sense; and I don't think you're fond of running your head against posts; but depend on it, Pak, you never make a greater mistake, than when you jeer in that fashion at all a fellow holds sacred."

"Well, well, *Hecco mio*, it's my way;

I suppose it isn't quite good manners, but then look at the bringing-up of the boy. Some day, I now and then think, a certain soft eye under its curls may teach me better ; but that day isn't on yet, my friend. However, to take the thing for once seriously, you meant to let me into a confidence, and I've shown myself unworthy of it—so there's an end of the matter."

"No, no, indeed there isn't. It's time you knew. You and I shall not soon see the last of one another, Pak," said the speaker, sitting up and looking him in the face eagerly. "I was born a Catholic ; I have lived a Catholic ; and a Catholic I mean to die. The Catholic faith is grained into me as deep as life."

Pak lay back on the grass, folded his hands over his head, and gazed up into the sky. Nothing was said for some minutes. At last,

“Well, I suppose you expect me to say something. If *you* are a Catholic, then the Catholic faith must be something better than I ever gave it credit for. That’s all I have to say.”

So they rose up, and went on with their climbing. Silence was first broken when they stood on the summit of Hitherleigh Beacon. And it was on this wise. Pak waved his arm round the level of the wide sea-line, now seen high up in the sky, and turning to Heckswy, said quietly, with something of an air of triumph, “*Eppur si muove*” (“yet it moves”).

“Ah, dear friend,” said Heckswy, “I’ve forged the missing links. You think I can’t be what I just now confessed myself, and yet a votary of science. Is that it?”

“Well, not far off.”

“Glad it’s come so soon; glad too that it has taken that form.”

“Why?”

“Because it saves us both a deal of trouble. Do you remember those beautiful lines of Richard Lovelace’s which you quoted to me one day last half-year, about not going out on the sly to meet Emmy?”

“To be sure I do :

‘I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more.’ ”

“Well, apply them.”

“Yes—but how? which is the young lady?”

“Can you doubt?”

“O, I see it; and by the light of old Richard himself. It’s somehow thus : You see, his Lucasta was what they call concrete; there she was; eyes, cheeks, lips, and the rest, and he loved her a great deal. But he loved something else more. And what was that? Was it eyes, cheeks, lips, or anything of that sort? Was it

even metal that chinked in a purse? Not a bit of it; it wasn't concrete at all, but it was abstract; something that he never saw, nor anyone else; quite grand and noble, but abstract, and all up in the sky. And something too of a kind that, if awkward acts were ever done in its name, he could disavow them, and say they weren't worthy of it. And so, my dear friend, your young lady is Science; she's all right, and substantial; not exactly eyes and lips, but still something you can depend upon and be sure of; and her you love very much, as I can testify. But there's something else you love more. And what's that? Why, a grand ideal up in the sky, which no man ever saw; something quite spotless:

‘A milk-white hind, immortal and unchanged,’

as Dryden has it. And if any of her

people happen to do awkward things and call them her acts, you're ready to repudiate them. She didn't imprison Galileo—not she ; she never burnt Savonarola, nor Ridley, nor Latimer—eh ?”

“ Ah, Pak, you're too sharp by half ; but I think it is somehow nearly as you describe it. Still, a pure ideal is a fine thing.”

“ Daresay it is ; but I prefer Emmy ; and as long as I can have her and honour together, I'll spend my love on the concrete, and take off my hat to the abstract. But we must push on, or give up our bathe ; for the sun is westering fast.”

Just as they were about to enter the water, Heckswy took from off his neck a medal. “ There,” said he, “ that was blest by Pio Nono, when he sent us out to fight the Austrians in '48.”

“ And what's Pio Nono now ?” cried

Pak triumphantly, as he leapt over the sands to take his plunge.

“What bad men have made him, and he wants good men like you and me to unmake,” shouted Heckswy after him.





CHAPTER IV.

PROGRESS IN OTHER QUARTERS.

THE long vacation came to an end at last, Gerald returned to his Alma Mater, and Emmy to the quiet of the Rectory.

This sojourn at Overton had been a very happy time. Emmy had been treated as Lucy's sister both by the good Colonel and by herself. The girls had been busy at their studies, and weeks and months had flown by incredibly fast, for Mr. Heckswy's lessons had commenced in August. He gave them an hour twice a-week, one lesson being devoted to French, the other

to Italian ; and they both worked for him between whiles with a right good will.

To Emmy especially, this was a real delight. She came fresh to the field ; for in the dame's school to which her mother had sent her, the knowledge taught was, of course, of the most rudimentary kind, and there was no stimulus to urge her on. And on the other hand, Lucy, now she had Emmy to compete with, conceived a sudden passion for acquiring modern languages, and fairly astonished Mr. Heckswy by her rapid progress.

“ Ah, Miss Lucy,” he would say, with an approving nod of his head, “ that is better, much better ; you are fast improving ; you are no longer the butterfly you were.”

“ No,” answered Lucy demurely, “ I am a great stupid moth now, trying all I can to get at the light ; you will see

I shall burn my wings by and by, and die a martyr to the search after knowledge. Do you know why Emmy and I are so keen in learning Italian?"

"Because it is a beautiful language, I suppose, in which beautiful thoughts look more beautiful than in any other garb."

"O you deluded man, what do we care about that? It is all because we have fixed to go off to Garibaldi and offer ourselves to him as two Amazon privates, and help to liberate Italy. You see, your converts multiply more rapidly than you had calculated."

"Miss Lucy," answered her master, "the deliverance of an oppressed people is far too serious a matter to make merry about; I at least hope to be there to lend a hand in good earnest; and I fancy" (with a glance at Emmy) "I shall not go alone."

The good man's eyes sparkled, and his sallow cheeks glowed with enthusiasm, as they always did when he was on this and kindred themes. Lucy looked at him almost reverently, awed by his deep earnestness, and said quite humbly, "You must forgive my nonsense, Mr. Heckswy; I really do sympathise with you. I am afraid I try to stir you up, that I may hear your warm defence of the champions of liberty. Emmy and I are their admirers, I assure you, as much as you and your friend can be."

"Well, well, Miss Lucy, there's nothing to forgive; and now, rightabout face! and back to our muttons."

Little encounters of this kind at last became so frequent, that it was resolved by common consent that there should be no conversation except in the language of the day, which, as both girls were

novices in Italian, kept half their lessons free from discussion and banter.

Heckswy, a little maliciously, generally chose that half for proclaiming, in the tongue almost unknown to Emmy, the praises of his young friend Pak. As, however, lovers have a wonderful instinct of their own, *supra grammaticam* and everything else, he had the pleasure of noticing the bright blush and pleased smile which even his half-apprehended sentences brought up on the face of his new pupil; and he had the additional pleasure of reporting the same to him to whom they were due.

And besides, the memory of the pupil for the particular phrases which had not been understood was truly wonderful; and to interweave a difficult word in such a sentence was to ensure its becoming an easy one ever after.

The drawing-lessons were of course

far too charming to be discontinued, connected as they were with fair forms and bright colours, and now, by consent of Gilp himself, with cliff rambles, and sometimes picnic luncheons, and the chance of meeting a native or two—to one at least of the girls not a matter of indifference.

Emmy thought it was too late for her to learn music, but Lucy insisted on her trying; so that also was set forward, and Mr. Gregory, the Netherton organist, became an additional visitor at the villa.

Then there were drives and walks to be taken, poor neighbours to be visited, and among them especially little one-armed Johnny, in Paradise-place, who was quite a pet of the two girls. They went to him constantly, carrying fruit, flowers, and little niceties from the Colonel's table. There was the additional temptation of looking in at No. 3, where the Podgery always

greeted them with a hearty welcome, as girls "about whom there warn't none o' yer nonsense," and where Emmy could have sat for hours, listening to the good mother's and Amy's racy stories about Tiffy and Pak. Many a time have the sides of the girls ached, as they mounted from Northcliff-lane to the villa, with laughing at some quaint Somerset idiom of Mrs. Podger's, or some jolly blurt of good-humour of Amy's; and many were the innocent robberies of the Colonel's dessert-dishes for biscuits and nuts to gladden young Podgerdom withal. So that in Paradise-place the popularity of our two young friends was beyond question.

In the evenings the Colonel would often read to them, and generally out of Shakespeare, of whom he was a devoted admirer. He used to say (after some greater man; I forget whom) that with his Bible

and with Shakespeare he could bear solitary confinement for a twelvemonth. A mistake though, as Lucy told him ; for a more sociable man never existed. And after the readings, the fine old gentleman would say : " Now, girls, I've earned my rubber." And so the two soon became initiated in the mysteries of the finest of games, and intimate with that important and disagreeable personage, Dummy ; and with kisses for points, they insured the Colonel just that penumbra of sleep which advancing age requires, and so kept him hale and hearty from day to day.

Of course, many people came and went at the villa : a man doesn't become a Colonel without having picked up a fair stock of acquaintances. By constantly meeting new faces, Emmy got to feel much less shy by the time this visit was over. And as the visitors were almost all gentle-

men, they did not interfere much with the girls at their times of employment.

Of Gerald they saw very little. Lucy declared he was afraid of Emmy.

“For though I told him you had forgiven him, he said it was too good to be true. He felt he had made ‘a confounded ass of himself,’ and begged me to tell you so, and get his pardon in due form. I told him I would duly report his message, but I was afraid you would be offended afresh at the terms of it; upon which he went away in a huff.”

Anyhow, he made himself scarce at the villa, which, to Emmy at least, was a great relief.

And so the time slipped by, and Emmy once more found herself at the Rectory, in her yellow-papered bedroom, sitting by her own little bookcase. And there was the quiet old-fashioned garden, and the jabber

of the jackdaws ; but there was also what had never been made so plain to her before, the warm welcome of the Rector and his wife. And so, on account of all these, but mainly because of the last, which blessed the rest, there was, notwithstanding her happy stay at Overton, a calm peaceful feeling in this returning “home,” as the Rectory had, she felt for the first time, now really become to her. For the first time, too, it was “borne in upon her mind” that Mrs. B. had really adopted her as her own ; and it had sunk into her very heart, though she had heard it a hundred times before, that the Rector had called her his daughter when he welcomed her at the porch.

And so she felt, this time, something of the happiness of returning *home* ; the overflowing of love towards everything—

even the familiar carpets and chairs, and papers on the walls (irrespective of taste) ; towards the garden, with its shrubs and flowers ; and especially towards her own little sanctum, tidied up carefully as she found it, but with not one tittle of its arrangements altered.

Such were Emmy's thoughts as she sat at her pretty dressing-table, in front of her window, combing out her bright auburn hair. She was preparing for dinner in a leisurely way, her blue dressing-gown over her shoulders, and a little white hand slowly drawing the comb through the tangled curls. Her full liquid eyes were looking dreamily across the intervening drive and laurels, and the bit of church-yard with its sombre yews, to the fine old tower just opposite ; and she herself was far away in a delightful castle of her own building. Pak had become rich, and

a great man, and they lived in a peaceful little home of their own, which she had decked up outside and inside at her own fancy. Then Pak would build about them other cottages like their own, with little garden-plots ; and they would go out together, and find people who had no homes,—as they themselves had been sought and found,—and would bring them to these cottages. And there should be honeysuckles over all the porches, and plenty of clear spring-water to renovate the town children and get them rosy faces. And everyone would love them both, and look up to him ; and beyond all, she should live and bloom in his love. She had not found the geography of this little paradise. It was not to be at Netherton nor at Overton, the only places she knew, but in some favoured country far more beautiful than either.

The little dreamer had not half laid out her plans, when the bell rang ; and she had to hurry on her white - muslin dress, and to fly down to dinner. And so the old Rectory life settled down into order again, but with not a few modifications.

Emmy still carried on her studies with the Rector, but at odd times, as she continued most of her lessons with Lucy, and generally prepared for them in her own room. She had no leisure to find the life dull now.

And Mrs. Bythesea was certainly much altered since Emmy first knew her. She could not conceal her pleasure at having her "daughter" back again, and was, as far as in her lay, affectionate towards her, and by the very effort, and its success, was rendered gentler to the world in general, even Lucy included. For she could not but confess that she had judged the

motherless girl somewhat harshly, and that her company had done Emmy more good than harm. The good lady was gradually losing that entire confidence in herself and in her own infallibility which had marked her character hitherto. It was an uncomfortable, humiliating process to go through, but one very salutary to hard, dogmatic natures like hers.

Autumn had passed, and December, bright and cold, had set in. Things being so cosy at the Rectory, Emmy felt disinclined to fly away again from the home nest, and was sorry to hear the Rector's announcement, one morning at breakfast, that he had a letter from Gerald, saying they might expect him some day in the following week.

"And Lucy will be expecting you too," said his wife. "I promised you should spend your Christmas there."

“You didn’t tell me so, my dear,” said the Rector; “I don’t like parting with our child again so soon; and, besides, you know, my brother and Lucy always dine with us on Christmas-day. So, unless,” turning to Emmy, “the little one thinks she will spend a dull Christmas here, and wishes to go, I shall command her to stay.”

He said this with a pleasant smile, but a very decided voice. Emmy did not see Mrs. B.’s troubled face and knitted brows, or she might not have answered as promptly as she did—

“I had much rather spend my Christmas with you here at home.”

“Then that is settled,” said the Rector cheerfully; “now run into my library, and get our books ready by the time I come.”

And so the good man was left to argue it out with his wife. He felt that, for

once, circumstances had turned the tide in his favour enough for him to take the guidance of affairs into his own hands. He impressed upon her, that if Emmy were sent away whenever Gerald came home, it would be sure to put into their heads the very mischief which she so much wished to avoid.

“People hardly ever fall in love with those they live with,” said he; “this involves seeing one another at unromantic times, when hunger makes them devoted for the time being to meat and groceries, or sleepiness makes them stupid, or cold makes them cross and selfish.”

The Rector was so set on his point, and there was so little to be said against it from the course of things, that he carried it at last; and Mrs. B., though not without sundry misgivings, was really glad to keep Emmy with them. Lucy was not well

pleased at first ; but on Emmy's telling her laughingly that she must be constantly looking in at the Rectory, to protect her from the dangerous Gerald, and convincing her how uncomfortable it was to turn out in the middle of winter, she, too, was fairly satisfied.

It was Christmas-eve, and Gerald had not yet arrived. Lucy and Emmy had been merrily busy all the afternoon dressing up the picturesque rooms at the Rectory with holly and ivy. The work was now finished, and Lucy had gone home, to return with her father in the evening. Emmy, tired with her labours, had made herself comfortable in the Rector's arm-chair in his study, which had been the last room they had decorated. It was dark outside, but a bright fire blazed up the broad chimney, and was reflected in the Dutch tiles at the back ; and by its light

she was learning some of Milton's *Ode on the Nativity*, "This is the month, and this the happy morn," to repeat to the Rector to-morrow. And she looked just the figure for the quaint old room, with its oak-panelling, well-filled bookcases, and deep bay windows ; her scarlet jacket (which Lucy had made her, to wear with the black-silk skirt before mentioned) and bright face lit up by the firelight, coming out as a charming bit of foreground from the sombre background of the shaded corner behind.

The door, which was in the shadow, opened, and Emmy called out, "O please, sir, come and explain to me who these heathen deities are ; the first part of this is very beautiful, but I am getting in despair at all these long names ; I wish Milton, who can write so tenderly and intelligibly, wasn't so fond of bringing in his learning : it's hard on ignoramuses like me."

Looking up smilingly for the rebuke she expected, she saw standing before her, not the Rector, but his handsome son, looking particularly so now, with the glow of the frosty air on his cheeks.

Emmy blushed, remembering their former encounter; and Gerald, instead of wearing the easy supercilious air with which he had first met her, appeared shy and awkward, and was quite deferential in his manner.

“I beg a thousand pardons for intruding on you,” he said; “but the fact was, I found no one in the other room, and came here as a last resource.”

Emmy laughed gaily, and answered, “It would be hard indeed if *you* had to apologise to an interloper for entering your father’s study.”

And then, seeing him redden up, and guessing his thoughts, she added, “I didn’t

mean to be malicious, nor to remind you of an unpleasant mistake. You apologised for that long ago through Lucy, and I owe you an apology, too, for the temper I showed; so shall we shake hands and forget it?"

The young man grasped the little hand put forth to him so warmly, that Emmy winced with pain, and said gaily, "You are punishing my fingers for the sins of my tongue. Now I will leave you to the luxury of that delicious arm-chair, while I go and tell aunt that you are come."

Gerald, being left alone, threw himself down on the arm-chair with a sigh. "What a fool I am, to be sure!" he said, "to be so bewitched by a little schoolgirl without a *sous* to her name. Her eyes have haunted me ever since they flashed on me in my uncle's garden last summer. I shall be falling in love with a pauper, head over

ears, if I don't take care what I am about !”

And he did take care. All that Christmas vacation he fought against his growing admiration of Emmy. He said very little to her, but devoted himself to Lucy, who, according to Emmy's injunctions, kept assiduous watch at the Rectory. And so much was this the case, that Emmy, all unsuspecting of the truth, and therefore perfectly at ease with him, began to turn in her mind whether he was a match worthy of her friend, all unattractive as he seemed to herself. This thought was at last a real trouble to her ; especially as, from her innate delicacy of feeling, she did not hint her uneasiness to Lucy, or even sound her on the subject. Her own Pak was so noble and true, so infinitely worthier of the “grand old name of gentleman,” despite his unknown birth, than this hand-

some supercilious Oxonian, that she could not tolerate the idea of his being the same to Lucy as Pak was to her.

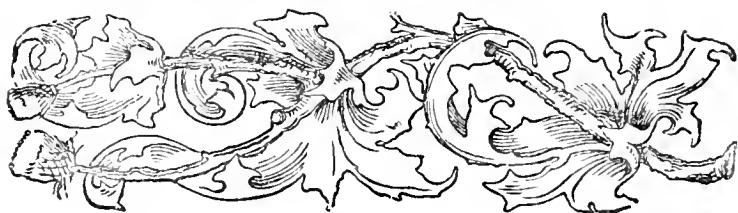
In addition to this secret anxiety, she saw, with her keen perception, when those whom she loved were concerned, that the kind Rector and his wife were in trouble; and from some offhand remarks of Lucy's, she guessed that Gerald and his extravagance were the cause. His disrespectful manner to his parents, and especially to his mother, also roused her anger; and she was often annoyed and surprised by hearing Lucy laugh at his sarcastic jokes about her aunt, and thus encourage him in his disrespect.

Altogether, there seemed a clearance of the atmosphere when Gerald was gone again.

And so here Emmy remained, leading a quiet, healthful life, steadily pursuing

her studies, making way into the hearts of those about her and those beneath her, enjoying Lucy's friendship, and getting occasional glimpses of one who was more than a friend, which, though few and far between, seemed to help her mightily on her way.





CHAPTER V.

A CRISIS.

ELL, it *was* a scene !”

Such was the exclamation, as Homer has it, of one boy looking on another, after a matter which fell out thus in the school.

It was Thursday, the day for the Doctor's history-class. It was his custom to lecture his sixth form on history in the audience of the fifth, who, without being the direct objects of the lesson, made such notes as they could, and were examined on it in a general way. The Doctor, as already stated, was a Tory to the backbone. It were hardly possible to ima-

gine, as animating his form, and looking out from his eye, anything but the “good old” principles of right divine ; past might turned into present right, to the exclusion of present and future might and right ; abuses for which ample reason can be given ; and so on, and so on. Several things lately said, and written in exercises by his *protégé* Pak, had evidently been not to his mind ; and he had bottled up his opportunity for a crushing demolition of them, and of him, and of another who companied with and advised him.

He was led in this lecture to speak with admiration of the absorbing tendencies of the Roman Empire. Large empires, imposing constituted powers, are ever objects of veneration with your Tories. They forget by what exceedingly radical measures these organisms become thus constituted, and how they are only kept

alive by the continued stirring of antagonistic energies. The Doctor called attention to the judicious way in which the swamped nationalities were treated in the process of absorption, and drew strong contrasts between what such petty governments would have degenerated into if let alone, and that which they became when the genial sap from the great Roman trunk flowed into them. He quoted examples of illustrious men sprung from, and seats of learning planted in, the "mediatised" provinces. And hence he derived a lesson for the advocates of oppressed nationalities in our own days. Having done this, he proceeded to indulge his political views by painting a strongly-coloured picture of those advocates themselves, as witnessed in our own country. He described the "scamps of Poles," on occasion of whose visit the greatcoats and

umbrellas in your hall are not safe, and the even more degraded scamps of Hungarians. He then descended lower, and gave a description of the English youth who favour such claims and claimants; and—alas for descriptive power, snaring and dragging away those who are gifted with it!—he ended by pointing the sting in the form of a most masterly caricature of Heckswy and Pak, as young agents and emissaries of the would-be Polish republic.

The kind-hearted but far too clever Doctor had no notion whither he was tending, or what catastrophe awaited him.

Scarcely were the last clenching words of the caricature out of his mouth, when a too-surely aimed missile, in the strangely retributive form of a compactly bound volume of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of*

the Roman Empire, came with stunning force on his temples, and felled him to the floor.

A wild rush which followed this passed almost unnoticed in the general consternation. The boys surrounded him in an instant; water was fetched, and two or three even went off for Dr. Resp. But the medical man was not at home, and was not wanted; for three minutes sufficed to bring round the head-master.

Many Tories are noble fellows; all the worse, of course, for being Tories, but all the more for that obliged to bring out the highest parts of their nature, to earn toleration for, and gain an escape from, the baser lot which they have chosen in life. All justice to Dr. Digam! Be it related that with returning sense came quick repentance; that with handkerchief to his bleeding brow he leant over his

desk, as far as his small stature would permit him, and said, "Well, gentlemen, it was sharp measure; but I am not sure that I hadn't earned it. I was led away, by my strong political principles, to speak too keenly of, and make too pointed a reference to, some among us, whom on other accounts I highly value. Pak, I wish to say a word to you."

It is needless to state that the person addressed was not present. This fact was far easier to substantiate than it was to ascertain where he had gone. The back-door of the school was standing open, and his agile habits made all roofs and walls to him alike. It was not the first time that, after an ebullition of temper, he had suddenly disappeared.

Under the impression that he would soon return, the Doctor paid no attention to his absence; and whatever lecture or

punishment might await him was for the present kept in reserve.

But Pak's secrets were perhaps deeper than were the Doctor and his schoolfellows. A cloud, which had been long gathering, had burst. His was not at any time the spirit to submit to what must be the second act of this Tragedy of Penitence. His ungoverned temper had once again taken the command; and however he might now, as on former occasions, regret it, the present consequences were too serious to be lightly regarded. What had been done was badly done: this he knew, even when ungoverned impulse led him to do it; this he felt more and more deeply, as each moment carried him onward from it.

But whatever the act had been, it was a break in the lad's life. What had been before it could never be again. Submit

to what humiliation he would, express what contrition he might, he never could again be the prosperous and honoured sixth-form boy ; he never could be the popular candidate for the scholarship ; he never could hold his face up as he had done before the Doctor. Some day,—charming and soothing monosyllables !—some day he might return with his way secured in the world, and make noble amends ; but irresistible was the conclusion that the present was broken up, and that a new order of things must begin.

Nor was this new order of things altogether to seek. Other plans had, as more than once hinted, been long ripening, which this crisis had brought to birth, we can hardly say prematurely. For the realisation of those plans another spirit had, as we also know, been as yet even more anxious than his own.

At the time of "the scene," Heckswy had been engaged with his mathematical lesson to the Lower School. News of this sort never takes long to travel; and the event had hardly happened, before a fifth-form boy burst in, interrupting the great forty - seventh proposition with, "I say, they've hove a big dictionary at the Doctor and floored him, and he's the wrong side of *compos!*"

Out darted Heckswy, and all the Lower School after him. Mr. Timins had been sitting with the fifth, and was already on the spot. Heckswy arrived just in time to see the Doctor revive, and to hear his challenge to Pak. The truth flashed on him in a moment. But he had presence of mind enough to order his boys back to the Lower School, and to finish his lesson.

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Under the north cliff, far off on the beach left by the retiring tide, there was a spacious cave, which had been used by smugglers when such people were, but had, during the period of our story, served only for the chosen council-place of the two friends. At high-water it was accessible by a very steep and rugged path, winding down the cliff; and this way to it was never closed, except at the top of the spring-tide. The cave itself lay high and dry at all times, save when such a tide coincided with a westerly gale. The inner portion was formed of dark and bare rock; at the mouth only, which got occasional sprinkles of spray, hung long fringes of sea-fern, quivering in the arch. The floor was formed of dry sand, and dappled with slaty stones of various sizes and hues, gleaming on their upper surface with the reflection of the sloping light.

At the moment when the narrative becomes concerned with this cave, the evening was beginning to close in, and a long gleam of level sunshine lay in rosy light across the smooth sand, losing itself in the dark beyond.

Over this line of brightness moved a shadow.

“I knew I should find you here, old fellow!”

“Ah, Heckswy, I’ve been a brute! I’ve injured my best friend in my vile temper; and what’s worse, it can’t be made up.”

“That’s just what I felt, Pak; and that’s what sent me here. What are you going to do?”

“Do? What can be done but go? Go, far from here—far from— Never mind, all ’ll be right some day—but go I must. Will you come at once?”

“I suppose I need not say where?”

“O no! We were taunted about the humbug of oppressed nationalities; what can we do but make a bottom to the taunt? You’ll come, I know; and if you won’t, I will. Let us go to the General. I know he wants us, or soon will.”

“Why, that’s my prudent Pacifico! See what one moment has done!”

“Prudent? hang prudence! Why did he sting a fellow like that?”

“Well, it seems to me, if the Doctor had been the General’s recruiting-agent, he couldn’t have done his work better.”

“Poor dear Doctor! How his heart will bleed! But I say, Heckswy, it’s no matter for explanations, nor pardon-beggings; it’s too bad for that. What a brute I was!”

“The Doctor may have you up for assault, you know.”

“Have me up? He never will, not he; he’s the best fellow on earth, for all his Tory stuff!”

“But still some might try to persuade him. You know all are not your friends.”

“Well, then, good dear man, don’t let him have the bother of deciding—let’s be off.”

With this, Pak stood up from the stone where he had been sitting, and made a step forward in the direction of the mouth of the cave.

“To-night?”

“To-night.”

“Done?”

“Done.”

* * * * *

Once more the scene changes. A room with which we are already acquainted—its yellow paper, its little trim bookcase—the latticed window, the neat iron bed-

stead—all still in the hardly visible starlight—and the young inhabitant peaceful in unbroken slumber. Once before she had been suddenly awakened; but it was no such awakening now.

“Emmy!” said a firm, well-known voice.

The wildered girl suddenly sat up in bed. The dark light of the shape of the window was evidently further darkened.

“Emmy! don’t stir—only listen. It’s me (there, Bones, don’t you whine so)—it’s your own. I’m going—you’ve heard?”

“Yes, I heard.”

“For a long, long, long time. Bless me, Emmy.”

“May God bless you, and keep you, wherever you are!” was softly uttered, in a tone never to pass from the memory.

“Suppose you don’t hear for years?”

“Do you think I shall forget you?”

“No ; but promise ; it’ll be a comfort.”

“I promise.”

“Good-bye.”

“God bless you !”

She looked out eagerly from the pillow in which she had hidden her face. All was still. The full shape of the window again rendered the outer night. Her heart beat high in her throat.

Next morning, it was like a bright, calm dream. Every word—every moment of it—how precious !





CHAPTER VI.

WHITHER ?

THAT night the two friends left Netherton. Their scanty travelling baggage had been selected by Heckswy, on whom no suspicion rested. He had reluctantly consented to the interview at the window, without which Pak absolutely refused to leave; and awaited the young lover outside the Rectory-gate.

As they passed through Evenborough they encountered a solitary policeman, who, however, did not notice them. It was a strange thing, this deliberate abandonment of the home of years. Pak felt in his mind

that it must be a thing not dwelt on in thought, or the thought would become intolerable. He hardly could bear to look at the well-known houses ; and the very lamps seemed to him endued with life, and to be reproaching him as he passed them.

As they climbed the hill by Southcliff-lane and the Overton villas, the strain on their feelings was more than either could bear. At the gate of the Colonel's house both sat down for awhile, gazing on the town with its lights, spread beneath them.

The night was starlight, with no perceptible breeze. The soothing murmur of the sea came at regular intervals on the ear. The scent of garden-flowers floated in the air. What a bar was between them and that home, to which a few minutes would have taken them back ! Across both hearts rolled a wave of inclination to turn back, and undo the despotism of the will,

which was reversing the current of their life. At that moment a bright star shot across the Great Bear, and faded out near Arcturus in a trail of milky sparks. Anything, that, or an unusual sound, sufficed to break the reactionary spell that was binding them. Heckswy laid his hand on Pak's shoulder, and said determinedly, "Let us go on."

And they rose, and with rapid paces, never again looking behind them, strode on their way. Not a word passed for nearly an hour. Southerton, the next sea village, was some way behind them, when Pak broke silence by asking what course they were taking. Then ensued a deliberation and council as they walked on. Pak was for the rail to Dover, and advised turning up the next road to the left and making for the nearest station. But Heckswy suggested that probably they might find them.

selves, on emerging from the train, stepping into the arms of a policeman. So another plan was adopted. They walked on through the night, and about ten next morning arrived at Starmouth, the first considerable port eastward from Nether-ton.

There, the outer man having been refreshed at a humble wayside pothouse, they separated, and searched the harbour for some means of passage to France. On their meeting again at their place of rendezvous, Heckswy announced that he had found a French ship, the *Amitié* of Honfleur, Captain Puget, who, for a consideration, was willing to take them across. He asked three out of their few sovereigns. They must wait till his ship was ready, which would be, he said, in about two days.

It was considered safer to spend those

two days on board, for fear of any awkward *rencontres* in the town. So they found themselves at once in the midst of the French crew. Heckswy seemed to rejoice in having his tongue set free, and with eagerness took his part in the clatter which pervades every knot of Frenchmen. Pak, thanks to his companion's former aid, was able well to follow the talk, and occasionally even the jokes, which went on around him; but he had not yet acquired that confidence in the new tongue which only comes by use. So he sat among them, interested, but comparatively silent. And by way of whiling away the time, he took out his note-book, and beginning at first with sketches of the ships and rigging in the harbour, came by degrees to the living objects upon them, and accomplished some clever portraits and caricatures of the rough figures and groups about them. At

this the Frenchmen were intensely delighted, gathering round him, and forgetting other subjects of talk in expressing their interest and admiration. At last, a bright idea struck him. The captain was standing at some little distance talking to Heckswy, while the crew were mostly grouped behind himself, waiting for his next essay in art. He drew a clever likeness of the captain. It was instantly recognised, and was passed, the limner being nothing loth, from hand to hand, until it reached Captain Puget himself. He was as pleased as any could be, and of course the result was, that it was offered as a present to him. On this, the mate also came forward, and put in a petition for his likeness too; and there was a general hum, amidst which the names of Maries and other ladies might be distinguished, as persons who might be interested in the por-

traits of others. Then first Pak's tongue found free exercise. He explained to the honest Frenchmen, that they two were soldiers of fortune ; that they had but a small purse for their journey, which would soon be exhausted ; that, in consequence, they could not afford to throw away their labour. He should be too glad to serve them with their likenesses, or with the caricatures which they seemed to admire ; but he must have twenty centimes for every sketch. The terms were gladly accepted ; and Pak was installed portrait-painter to the good ship *Amitié*, at twopence per head.

So passed the four days, which it turned out to be, before they sailed. But in getting, and when they got, under way, then his main subject became changed from Frenchmen at rest to Frenchmen in motion ; and, although by this time

all the portraits had been drawn, and some in duplicate, Pak's trade forthwith became brisker. Figures and groups in caricature were now thrown off—handling the rigging, or climbing, or swabbing the deck; and the whole of his time was occupied as much as before.

The result was, that on arriving at Honfleur, and settling outstanding accounts, the sum of five francs forty centimes was placed to the credit of the common fund.

The idea thus fairly started was too good by far to be abandoned. That first evening, over the bottle of *Bordeaux ordinaire*, it was agreed to work through France in this manner, husbanding all they could, and earning all they could. Heckswy could draw no figures but geometrical ones, but his turn for a bright idea now came: he was clever with his fingers—why

should not he turn framer, and so earn his part likewise ?

So, early next morning, an expedition was undertaken into Havre. A stock of thin drawing-board was laid in for Pak's sketches, and some slight gilt-moulding and varnish for Heckswy's share of the work.

When they returned, they found that fame brings customers. Some of their old shipmates had sought them out, in company of the Marie or Josephine of whom they had before heard, and some bringing a friend. So Pak's hands were very full for some days ; in fact, until it became quite necessary to think of prosecuting their journey, in order to arrive in the South in time for the stirring events which were anticipated by the journals. They therefore arranged to give their customers the slip, and work onwards.

It appeared best to take the line of the villages, rather than that of the large towns. These latter would not be like Honfleur, where they had had such excellent introductions ; in all probability they would have difficulty in first creating an interest in their simple work, and would then, by the delay, besides losing valuable time, become involved in additional expenses.

So they studied a map of France in a shop-window, and made out a route, copying the names of a hundred or more villages lying in their direction. Paris they meant to visit, and after that to work on to Lyons ; but besides these, their present intention was not to enter any cities.

The first week was most successful. They had altogether maintained themselves, it is true, in the simplest manner,

and had turned over about three francs to the common fund, now amounting to something more than ten pounds.

The village people rose to the bait rapidly ; and Pak was able to raise his terms to thirty centimes for a caricature, and fifty centimes for a portrait ; and Heckswy got fifty more for framing. The subjects for caricature were picked up by the way. A French soldier is himself a caricature, with his loose trousers, and tight gaiters, and epaulettes up to his ears, and bayonet twice his own height. He fits into any grotesque situation ; and then a fat Frenchman, and a lean Frenchman, if decently drawn, fall naturally into funny attitudes and combinations ; and the children's little bright faces are so droll ; and the poodles ! It may well be imagined that he did not want for subjects. Like a stage clown, he had his

standing joke ; and it cut two ways. He undertook a caricature, and drew it so as to be an evident portrait, demanding his extra twenty centimes ; or he undertook a portrait, and on its coming out, told his sitter that he or she really was so funny-looking, that he could not in conscience charge for a portrait, but would let it go as a caricature for the thirty centimes. Either of these not very keen pieces of wit would send off his group (for he always drew in public) into shouts of laughter, and often would earn them both a good supper.

And so they drew on towards the great city, daily learning more of the character of the country Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, and liking it more the more they learned. It would be impossible to meet with more kindness than awaited them at almost every roadside

inn and cabaret. Jolly motherly dames were the hostesses, who would treat them like sons, and load them, not only with compliments, but with real substantial favours ; and the younger and more attractive were full of lively sparkle, and never-ceasing talk and banter ; so that the days, notwithstanding the gloom of the past and the utter uncertainty of the future, passed pleasantly as well as profitably ; until the houses began to thicken by the roadside, and the Seine to be spanned by more bridges ;—and then the suburbs, and at last the barriers, and the *octroi*, and they were in Paris.

It was difficult to resist the temptation to plunge into that great sea of gaiety, and, after their manner and according to their scanty means, to take a taste of its delights. But partly the narrowness of those means, partly other schemes

which they burned to realise, dissuaded them.

One day they gave to a thorough ramble round the principal objects, a second to the Gallery of the Louvre—all new to Pak, and the subject of many a memory and many a dream in the eventful years that followed. The next day they spent only so much time as was necessary to refit them with stock-in-trade, and then started for Lyons.

They made for it after their former fashion, shunning the towns, and taking the routes communicating from village to village. In this way they compensated for their comparative slowness of progress by the ever-increasing store which they were laying up for the uncertain future demands of their proposed campaign.



CHAPTER VII.

NON INVENTI.

THE morning after the departure, two places were vacant in Netherton School. The Doctor had lain awake some hours, if the truth were known, during the night, speculating whether one of those places would be filled on his appearance in school. And, as he entered, he cast an anxious glance towards the spot where Pak's honest face was wont to be seen over the desk, and his comely bare feet under it. But it was empty; and he had no sooner reached his desk, than Mr. Timins approached him, and a few words passed in private. In

consequence, both of them left the school, and returned in a few minutes, the Doctor looking very blank and unlike himself. It was Friday, the morning for the higher school mathematics. So there was no staving-off the announcement.

“Gentlemen,” said the Doctor after prayers, “I fear you are not likely to see Mr. Heckswy this morning ; if you please, you will break up the mathematical classes, and resume your yesterday morning’s work.”

Thus having said, he left the school, and sought his friend the Mayor, who now for the third year was filling that honourable office.

The result of the interview was simply—nil.

“Had anything been taken ?” inquired his worship ; “any locker robbed ? anything missing ?”

The Doctor at once, with something of an indignant air, undertook to guarantee that nothing of the kind had happened.

“Have you any wish to pursue and bring back your runaway scholar?” asked the Mayor; “but, let me see, now I remember, he is your scholar only by his own consent; there has been no legal document, has there, constituting you his guardian?”

“None whatever,” answered Dr. Digam; “and even if there were, I should not think of giving chase to him. He is a lad of great ability and genius, and of thoroughly good principles as far as conduct goes, and he is in company which makes me suspect whither his course is bent. I love the lad too well ever to force him back again to me.”

“Well,” answered the Mayor; “but now I think of it, isn’t there a lady in the case—that Miss Benson, now at the Rec-

tory? Depend upon it, he'll gravitate back there again before long; besides, it isn't in human nature not to have made her some communication about his plans. I think if you really want to know what is become of him, the Rectory would be your best place for inquiry."

And thither accordingly went the discomfited Doctor; saw first the Rector, then Emmy.

It was a sore trial for the poor faithful girl to see the Doctor in such distress, and to feel all unable to tell him even what she knew of its cause. Thus much, however, she did tell him—that though she could not pretend to know more about it than others, she knew enough to be able to say that she was sure all search for Pak would be utterly useless.

This only confirmed his own consciousness of the real state of the case. So that,

before he reached his own door again, all idea of giving chase had been abandoned. As the hours had worn on, thoughts crowded on his mind which might have suggested themselves before. He knew some fragments of Heckswy's history, and, with these, he was aware of his ardour for the regeneration of Italy, a matter of which about that time the English papers were full.

Putting these things together, he had formed an idea in his mind of that which had happened ; and he also conceived another idea—that the less busy tongues said about it, the better.

So the Doctor returned to his desk, and from that moment onwards no word ever escaped his lips respecting Pak or Heckswy.

The matters left in Heckswy's room, and the few odd note-books and school-books found in Pak's locker, were carefully

put away, in case their owners should ever claim them.

And from that time Dr. Digam was a "sadder and a wiser man." No one ever again heard him launch out into sarcastic abuse of oppressed nationalities, or indulge his vein of satire by caricaturing their advocates. Even his Toryism, some whispered, was not wholly above suspicion of having received a shake. At all events, he did not take his party's side with that fervour to which Netherton dinner-tables had been accustomed ; and he had been known to deprecate occasionally the very hard names which the upholders of the nation as it is are fond of bestowing on the greater half of the nation. So that many of the Doctor's soundest opinions dated, like the Mahometan world, from a flight.

Before many days were over, the au-

thorities and the good Doctor received a communication from the absent philosopher, which satisfied them that, at all events, he knew more than they did, and acquiesced in what he knew.

But other portions of Netherton besides the School and the Rectory were affected by what had happened.

All kinds of reports were current in the town. So strange had been Pak's whole course, that if he had vanished into air, or ridden off on a cloud, some people would hardly have been surprised; but that that sharp, dark gentleman "as taught the mathematics" should have gone with him, seemed to baffle such hypotheses altogether. Pak might be a changeling, or a pixie, as they call the "good folk" in the west; but a mathematical master—"a gent as larned land-surveying,"—he clearly couldn't be anything of the kind. So wits

were set to work to account for the escape. Some said that there had been high words about her as had been Emily Benson, the joiner's girl; that Pak had murdered Heckswy, and buried him in No Man's-land; to which the more imaginative added, that after the fact, he had jumped off the pier-head and swum out to sea, and that a fiery track was seen where his wake had been till the next spring-tide. The more sober listened to the tale that the Rectory dog had been heard whining that night in a most uncanny manner, and that policeman Perrypat had seen two figures, very like the missing ones, passing through Evenborough towards midnight.

Paradise-place had its share in these puzzles, and in the surmises thereupon arising. Mrs. Podger, with whom was Amy, was very full of a suspicion that Old Nick had gone off with both,—seeing as how

Master Pak never went to church till he couldn't help it, and t'other man had, as Amy suggested, coal-black hair and terrible dark eyes. *She* rather inclined to the belief that Heckswy *was* the said old gentleman, sent to tempt and destroy Master Pak ; but Mrs. Podger upheld the more obvious belief suggested by the street Punch. Tom utterly laughed to scorn the whole supernatural hypothesis, and argued that they must be gone to the Indies to seek their fortune. In his own heart of hearts, he had a shrewd suspicion of the real state of the case ; for Pak had sometimes made him a confidant, and he knew the feelings of both for Italy. But this he carefully kept to himself, imagining that he alone had any such thought.

Meantime, Emmy had not been long in making Lucy a sharer in her secret. She had described to her that night-scene, and

all that was said; and more than once, as the two sat folded together, she had sobbed out her sad heart on the comforting bosom of her friend.





CHAPTER VIII.

A VENTURE, AND ITS SUCCESS.

BETTY sat on her low window-sill, her arm resting upon it, her head on her hand, looking wistfully across to the old church, wondering, wondering, as she often did now, what had become of him who was in her daily thoughts. For some time after those farewell words, she almost wished she could forget him, so weary and worn was she in heart and mind with longing, thinking, conjecturing about him. And what made it worse was, that all Netherton and Overton were for a time full of it. The idlers on the hill

found in it ample subject for discussion; and so well was Pak known in the town, that there was not a house where the story—and a good deal more than the story—was not told. Therefore Emmy heard of it wherever she went. Garbled accounts of the affair were continually given in her presence; some amplifying the blame on one side, some on the other. For a few days the happy dream, as it seemed, of those farewell words kept up her spirits; but after that they sank. She began to realise that he was utterly gone, and gone for an indefinite time; no one knew whither, though various guesses were made. Emmy knew full well that Italy was their goal. But how would they reach it? what hardships might he not have to endure by the way? How would he fare when enlisted under his General? What terrors might not be-

come realities in the chances of marauding and of battle? All these doubts haunted her day and night. She had not known till now, poor child, how the consciousness of his near neighbourhood had kept ever alive hope and interest; how the occasional glimpses she had of him served to sustain her brightness during the dull routine of her Rectory life; nor how these alleviations had enabled her to laugh off and not feel deeply the continual jars which are the lot of those who are cast with a person of Mrs. Bythesea's disposition. But now she felt them through and through, and grew irritable when they occurred, especially when, as was not seldom the case, her patroness took the harshest possible view of Pak's conduct. At the same time all this was doing her no real harm. All, especially the young and ardent, want an

awakening of this kind now and then to make them know their own weakness, and teach them to feel for others whose paths in life are more crooked than their own. It is when the wind is against the ship that her real qualities are tested; and the little craft betrayed in this her time of a heading gale no unseaworthiness. She "behaved," using the words in their nautical sense, "remarkably well." She hated herself for her angry, discontented moods, and reproached herself for her want of faith, now that the time for proving it was come. And so she passed through the valley of humiliation, and at last came to be contented and happy therein.

And now, as she sat leaning on her window-sill, there might be traced a change in the bright, childish face of three years ago. There was a softened, chastened look about the firm little mouth, and a

look of yearning pity in the large eyes. She had been reading and thinking much of late about the misery and sin among the crowded city poor, and among the ignorant in neglected country places. She loved to meditate on the fact of Pak's having gone a perilous journey with the noble aim of relieving the oppressed, and to connect it with a scheme of setting herself at home to emulate his example.

While pondering thus she heard a well-known tap at the door; and Lucy, bright and piquant as ever, tripped into the room.

"What, my little philosopher, in the meditatives, as usual?" she exclaimed, pushing back the brown hair with her fair jewelled fingers, and kissing Emmy's broad white forehead. "Only think, my child" (Lucy had not lost her pretty patronising way), "here have I been watching

you from behind that yew-tree for the last ten minutes, and have come full of curiosity to know what this wise little head has been pondering over."

"And what were you doing lurking among the tombstones, I wonder?" asked Emmy, with her old bright smile, which Lucy never failed to call up.

"Well, I was taking a sketch of your window, truth to tell, and even began an attempt at you yourself; but that's no answer to my question; and," hiding her sketching-book behind her, "I will not allow you a look at your own self until you tell me your thoughts."

"Well, then, I was thinking how many Lazaruses there are in this world, and how little any Dives among us does to ease their sores," said Emmy gravely.

Lucy too looked serious, and said, "That's quite true of me, Emmy, though

it never struck me before so much; for I certainly wear fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, and don't think about the wants of others unless I happen to see them, I'm afraid; but as for you, why you're always amongst the poor."

"Ah, that isn't what I mean, Lucy. I don't deny myself for their sakes—it is a mere pleasure to me to be amongst them; besides, they are my people, you know. What I want is, to go into those dreadful places where it is all darkness and misery, and try to bring them a little light."

"But, Emmy, that would never do for you. I've seen you turn as white as a sheet only to hear a tipsy husband bullying his wife."

"Yes, I know," said Emmy sadly; "whenever I hear sounds like that it seems to open up a great unknown depth

of sin and misery to me that I did not realise before, and that unnerves me; but I have thought how to strengthen my nerves."

"And what way may that be, my sweet saint?" asked Lucy. "I shall keep you under lock and key if you are going to put yourself to unnecessary torture."

"No, please don't dissuade me, dear Lucy," begged Emmy, looking pleadingly up in her face, "because you know I am not a saint at all, but a very silly, timid girl. You have more courage than I, so you must strengthen me. Will you promise?"

"Well, I'll see about it, if it's nothing very outrageous. What is it?"

"I mean to ask aunt Kate to let me attend the hospital here, to help the nurses, and learn of them; and so, you know, I should not only be fighting against

my timid shrinking from the sight of pain, but also be learning how to be a help to the poor people I want to cheer in a way they will be sure to appreciate. Besides, remember I owe the hospital a good turn."

Lucy read a quiet determination in her friend's face, to which it had evidently cost her a good deal to attain, and which was not to be shaken now. She was thoughtful for a minute or two, then said gently, "Well, Emmy, if I ever turn anything better than the butterfly I am now, I shall owe you thanks for it. I must say, I admire moral courage like yours. It beats my physical pluck all to pieces."

"If I have the courage you speak of, dear Lucy, it is because One has said His strength shall be made perfect in weakness. So, you see, you can have it

too, if you like ; and you would be by many times my superior if you had it," said Emmy.

"Well, I'll return to the tombstones and think over our talk quietly," said Lucy, giving Emmy a parting hug, while a tear glistened in her eye. "I get discontented with my butterfly life sometimes, I assure you ; but then I am so volatile that I don't believe I should ever carry through anything really worth doing," she added, with a shrug of her shoulders, as she left the room.

Emmy carried her point with the Rector and his wife after some demurring on their part. They yielded at last, seeing that her spirits were often depressed ; and, as the good man observed, there was nothing like active exertion for others to make you forget your own trouble, whatsoever it might be.

Thus it came to pass that Emmy became a veritable sister of mercy in her own quiet way; and while Pak was enduring much from his championship of the oppressed abroad, she was endearing herself to the poor and sick at home by her skilful nursing and sweet gentle ways; so that even the ill-natured among the lower orders, who had said unkind things of Emily Benson from jealousy since her change of position, were at last won to an unwilling admission that “she was not so stuck-up as they thought she would be, from the grand folks that had taken up with her.”

Emmy was returning from one of these visits of mercy on a bright sunny afternoon, feeling happy in her work and in the beauty of sky and sea,—for her errand had taken her near the coastguard station, and she was returning along the

beach,—when she saw some one approaching her whom at a glance she recognised as Gerald. He had been absent for the last two years, since his leaving Oxford, acting as tutor to two young noblemen whose family resided abroad.

He came up to her with a beaming face, and she met him with a frank smile of welcome. It seemed odd, as she thought it over afterwards, that his meeting her on the beach so soon after his return should not have struck her as anything strange. But she, all unsuspecting, began asking him about his journey and his welfare in the most unconstrained manner. He however cut her questions short by saying abruptly, “It’s no use going on talking like common acquaintance, Miss Benson. I have come out here on purpose to meet you, and to tell you that I love you ; that I have loved you ever

since our first encounter in my uncle's garden ; that I have fought against my infatuation in vain for the last two years, and now I have come back to ask you to be my wife."

The words were uttered eagerly and earnestly enough, but there was no tone of diffidence in the speaker's voice. Evidently he expected an immediate surrender. Emmy, thunderstruck as she was at the announcement, could not but smile at the term "infatuation," as it made her task the easier.

"Your words surprise me, Mr. Bythesa," she said ; "for though I am sure the infatuation, as you rightly call it, won't last, it seems ungrateful in me to refuse a request so earnestly made ; but I could never, never be your wife ; and nothing could alter my determination on this point."

She spoke quietly and firmly, conscious on the instant how beset with difficulties her life at the Rectory would be, unless he were thoroughly to believe her.

Gerald turned very pale. This was a difficulty he had never anticipated. His father and mother he knew he should have to win over; but Emmy herself he had not expected for a moment to find an obstacle. Her refusing so good an offer had never entered his list of contingencies. He argued with her a long time in vain, till at last her reiterated assurances that nothing could move her opened his eyes to the fact that he was baffled at the outset. Then he got into a passion, and stormed away about her destroying his happiness in life from a petty revenge for words he had once spoken and ever since regretted; or per-

haps from a false pride arising out of her humble origin.

Emmy felt this keenly; and when he at length changed from storming to passionate entreaty, she said very quietly, "I can't tell you how sorry I am to give you pain. I will be a sister to you, if you will let me; but what you ask me I can never be, for I am pledged to another, whose wife I have promised to be ever since I was a little girl."

She blushed crimson in making this confession; and it was only out of the tenderness and pity of her heart that she made it at all.

The effect upon Gerald was instantaneous. He drew himself up haughtily at the idea of a low-born rival, saying, "I am sorry it did not occur to me before, Miss Benson, that you naturally must have formed charming acquaintances in

your own circle before you came into ours. I've been making a fool of myself, that's all, and now you have cured me. I shall be off again by the next train, and you needn't tell any of my people I have been here. The servant who informed me of your whereabouts was a new one, and did not know me."

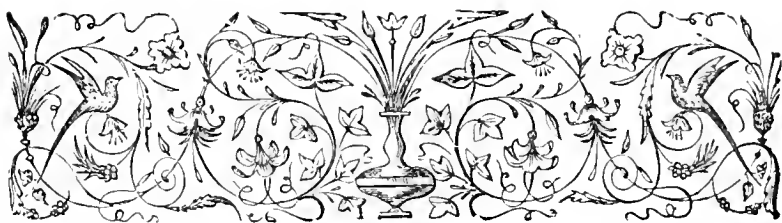
So saying, he lifted his hat and strode off, leaving poor Emmy angry and bewildered, and with the burden of a secret weighing on her mind. Her anger soon subsided, and turned into pity as she thought of her own lot in this matter. But she had never contemplated being so approached by any but one; and Gerald's declaration came upon her as a great shock. She had often shaped out in her fancy such an overture on his part to Lucy, and had speculated how they would do for one another; but that she herself,

to whom he hardly ever spoke when he was at home,—on whom he had always seemed to look down with contempt,—that she should be the object of his choice, was scarcely to be imagined.

A cloud gradually settled down on the Rectory; for nothing was heard of Gerald for several months, till at last a letter came from Australia, saying that he was trying his luck there, being tired of the humbug of English life; and adding, that his usual ill-fortune had followed him, and he should be glad of some money.

So Emmy had a work of brightening-up to do at home, in addition to her other labours of love.

And here she remained, months passing into years, and years slipping quickly away, in the busy routine of a useful life.



CHAPTER IX.

ANOTHER VENTURE, AND ITS SUCCESS.

THE travellers were coming to an end of their long course from Paris, and were expecting to reach Lyons in two or three days. Their route lay among the villages on the left or eastern bank of the Saône.

They had passed by Châtillon, and were taking the road in the direction of Trévoux, when, in the midst of a long avenue of poplars, their attention was directed towards a crowd of people crossing their way by a road at right angles, and tending eastward.

Nothing so favourable to their little

bourse as a concourse of *gens de campagne*. So they turned, and followed the multitude. They passed over a green upland, and into a village to the right of the bye-road. And the village was of this sort: a few mean houses, built principally of mud, or what is known in the West of England as cob-wall, had been supplemented by a row of larger dwellings, designated on their fronts as "Hotels," but themselves hardly above the average of a back-street in a town. A little church stood on a mound, rising by about a man's height above the village street. A humble brick *campanile*, of quite a southern character, pierced with two Byzantine windows on each side, formed the centre of a group of little whitewashed chapels, which had evidently grown round the ancient nave.

The thickest of the crowd were passing to the left of the church, and seemed to be

ranging themselves across a space of about twenty feet, which lay between the door of a humble white house and the southern entrance to the church.

There Pak and Heckswy posted themselves, but were unable to penetrate beyond the fourth or fifth row from the front rank. People of all stations were condensed around them; some evidently labouring under distress of mind.

“What are they waiting for?” said Pak to his next neighbour, a portly lady in black, with a broad white-frilled cap.

“For the *saint Curé*,” she answered; “he is coming across to the church, and everybody wants a word with him. As for me, I have been here all day for four days, and have never been able to touch him. But each in his turn; I am well content.”

She had scarcely spoken, when the house-door opened, and from under the

shade of a courtyard planted with elders looked a countenance which it would be impossible to describe in words. At once it may be said, that it was utterly unlike those of other men. There are but about half-a-dozen faces in history's gallery of portraits of which this may be predicated.

It was that of a man upwards of seventy years of age, wonderfully thin, but not with the emaciation which usually follows a mere life of asceticism. The very thinness told of unwearied force ; of a kind of being sustained more by the spirit than by the flesh. And such eyes have rarely been seen. They were, like those of most men of strong concentrated energies, very deeply set. They sparkled out of their sockets like gems from a dark cave ; but the fire had no glare, only brilliance. Pak saw the face ; saw it at leisure, for the Curé was stopped in those twenty feet many times,

and had to give words of advice and comfort.

“Let us go,” he said to his companion. And they turned back, past the west end of the little church, and entered one of the hotels. The *salle-à-manger* opened on the street; and when they had seated themselves at a table, and called for some wine and bread, Pak produced his folio, and in a few minutes had rapidly sketched-off two or three recollections of the face in its different expressions.

“*Ah, voilà notre saint Curé!*” said the hostess, as she brought the refreshment.

On this, all eyes were directed towards them.

“*Ah, que c’est bien fait!*” was the general exclamation.

From this to a flourishing trade was but a short step. They were told that the good Curé never would be photographed;

that attempts to take him at unawares had all failed, to his great amusement; that these of Pak's were the first life-likenesses ever produced. From drawing, they came to printing. Heckswy walked into Villefranche, the nearest considerable town, and engaged with an engraver to reproduce by hundreds the most popular sketch of the lot. A temporary lodging was hired, and something of a shop-window effect was aimed at.

The first day that the engravings were exposed for sale, the Curé was seen to go up the street. As he passed, he cast a look into the window; the shoulders went up, the hands enfolded one another. He was heard to say: "*Encore mon pauvre visage! Encore ce misérable pêcheur!*"

His eyes for an instant met Pak's, who was in the window finishing a sketch. At once he laid down his pencil; and when,

after a reverie of some minutes, he took it up again, his thoughts were elsewhere than upon his work.

The next day he was standing leisurely at the door, when he saw the Curé again coming up the street, but this time evidently with some immediate purpose in his mind. He soon became aware that he was himself the object at which the rapid eager pace was aimed.

The Curé bore directly down upon him, and, laying his hand on his shoulder, said, in a low but irresistible tone : “ *Mon enfant, suivez-moi !* ”

Pak had neither time nor inclination for questioning. He yielded up the hand which the Curé took, and followed him mechanically. He led him round the west end of the church, and in at the little door opposite the humble presbytery, into the small chapel next on the right.

What passed there, none but himself could tell. Those who knelt in the church outside could hear talk, long, loud, and passionate. The time occupied was much more than usual. The sounds at length subsided into a gentle uniform flow, which continued as if it would never stop. At last there was silence for a time ; and at the end of it the Curé appeared, leading a bowed-down figure, with its face buried in its hands, up to the foot of the altar. There the two forms knelt long and immovable, till the summer twilight darkened down in the corners of the little building, and only the crucifix before them was visible by the scanty light of the floating wick over their heads. Then the figures rose and departed.

Before they left the village, Pak had received baptism ; the bishop of the diocese had visited the Curé, and had con-

firmed him ; and he had been prepared for, and had made, his first communion. Heckswy, already a Catholic, had also come under the influence of the good Curé, and had received from him, after his own manner, that which had made him wiser and better.

News had reached them, during their stay, that matters in Italy had been for the present arranged. Indeed, the ardour of them both had somewhat abated. Not that the Curé had ever touched on things concerning the outer world, or asked them respecting their future plans ; but that the very atmosphere of the village had calmed their spirits, and rendered them less vividly anxious to mingle in the fray for liberty.

They determined for the present to settle down at Lyons. Heckswy was desirous to examine and profit by the various branches of engineering industry of which

such noble examples are there found; and Pak trusted partly to his old employ, partly also to the chance of giving lessons in English in some of the mercantile houses.

During their stay there, at the beginning of August, they heard the sad tidings of the death of the saintly Curé. He had been taken away in full work, having spent only the day before, as was his wont, full sixteen hours in his confessional. They took train for Villefranche, and attended his funeral. It was such a gathering as surely no country village ever before witnessed. Bishops, and priests, and distinguished persons, from all France, and from several parts beyond, had assembled to do him honour, and contended with the vast multitude for admission into the diminutive church.

The last duties over, the friends visited

the scenes of his truly-memorable life: the confessional, the humble presbytery,—and its only furnished room, the poor chamber in which he died. They threw a chaplet, among thousands, on his grave, and made their way back to Lyons.

On arriving there, they learned, by a message from head-quarters, that in a few months the General would wish all to join him who felt for his cause. They determined therefore to make their way slowly towards the south, and there await his summons.





CHAPTER X.

A WEDDING-GUEST.

PODGERDOM had been of course shorn of its chief interest, since the departure of its two strange inmates. But this world's interests have a way of quickly repairing themselves; and so when one died out, another sprung up.

Mrs. Podger was busy hanging out her linen in a drying-ground which might have served for a mark at sea. There was a bright sun and a brisk inshore breeze, and it was a golden day for laundresses. Amy was gone in to replenish the basket, and the leisureful Captain Davies, of the coast-guard, was sitting on the stone fence with his glass under his arm. The good lady

had been, for the perhaps five-and-fortieth time, lamenting the departure of her scientific lodger—not, however, on account of the rent, for that was remitted punctually every quarter to the Netherton Bank for her to go down and receive; but because the old garret was so desolate like, since his steps had ceased to be heard overhead. It was kept, she said, most scrupulously; not a telescope, or an article of furniture, was touched; and for months past no one had ever entered the room. Master Pak had gone in and out by the south window for some time after Mr. Tiffy went; but she didn't think he'd been for a while before he went off. He was too much “took up” with his “book larning” to mind “they old spyglasses.”

“I suppose, mum, you wouldn't fancy taking another lodger?”

“Another lodger, Cap'n? not by no

means in his room as he pays rent for, punctual quarterly, an' I fetches it from the Bank ; and I ha'n't got narry other, you know."

"But suppose the new lodger don't want any other?"

"O Cap'n, what be 'e telling o'?" said Mrs. Podger, one side of the sheet, which she thought she had fastened, falling to the ground on the grass and sand.

"Telling of what I mean," replied the Captain, descending from his perch, and gallantly picking up and giving her the lost corner; and then suddenly changing the mood, he made his most elaborate and rigid obeisance, and added, "and that is, mum, nothing less than to make you an offer of this heart and hand — Captain Davies, mum, of her Majesty's coast-guard service, and formerly of his Majesty's ship *Hirritator*, with his half-pay, mum, which,

with all his worldly goods, I thee endow, and it's a bargain."

To say that Mrs. Podger blushed, would be hardly stating the fact; the "reddest deep" of her cheek hardly admitting "a redder deep." But she partly stood, partly balanced herself, and looked so queer, that Amy, who was coming with her full basket, suddenly dropped it and ran to the assistance of her mother, thinking she was unwell.

"All right, Amy, all right," exclaimed the Captain; "she's only going to be my wife, that's all; and it's come a little sudden upon her."

It was Amy's turn now. So the two women stood transfixed, leaving the Captain to say, "Well, let it work, mum, let it work; take the advice of this your excellent daughter, and of your own excellent sense, and I'll look in to-night for an answer." So saying, he turned and went down the cliff.

Night came, and the Captain, and the answer. There could be but one. Captain Davies had been always a kind man and a good friend, and then the scale was weighted with Captain Davies's half-pay; and even Amy acknowledged what her mother had long felt—that the young ones were getting too much for them both; and Tom couldn't live at home, but must go out to service; and Mrs. Podger had her own individual views of the comfort of having a husband again. So all converged to the one reply. Perhaps if certain lesser Podgers had been consulted, the unanimity might have been somewhat modified; but they were not. That evening, then, Captain Davies was prospective master of the house.

Of course the neighbours had always foreseen it; and those who had pooh-poohed the prophecy, were severe upon

both parties. But, as usual, the purpose held notwithstanding; and weeks passed, and preparations were made, and the day drew on, till it had begun to be spoken of as "to-morrow."

Of course there must be a wedding-breakfast. Captain Davies had himself been a guest at that of the post-captain of the *Hirritator*, after she was paid off, and knew what was what. But where should it be? The Podger kitchen wouldn't do, that was clear. An inn had been thought of, but both the prudent souls voted that ruinous. The Captain and Amy were strong for Tiffy's garret. It ran the whole length of the house, and where was the use of letting it be locked up, like the dog in the manger, as Amy not very perspicuously observed, of no use to nobody? But the good lady herself wouldn't listen to any such proposal. Her firm anchorage

was, that the rent was paid punct'l every quarter, for her to go and fetch at the Bank; and it was all the firmer, that she had been only a week ago to receive it, and had it at that moment untouched in her box.

However, as the inevitable necessity drew on, even Mrs. Podger began to waver. But not till this, the very last day, did she fairly give way; and even then, under protest. She hoped the wedding-cake mightn't choke 'em all, coveting their neighbour's house, and them as ought to know better,—she did.

However, the victory was gained, and the Captain, having weightier matters in hand, bore his laurels meekly. Not so Amy, whose one object it had been to assemble a grand party in their house, and astonish the neighbours.

So the key was produced by Mrs. Podger, and Amy mounted in triumph to

open the door. Those below deposed that they heard her heavy steps, one after another, up the stairs, and that she fumbled for a minute or so before the rusty lock would turn. At last they heard the bolt draw ; but the next sound was not exactly what they expected. First, a piercing scream—then a series of sounds incoherent and scream-like, in which were mixed up the words “Mr. Tiffin,” “ghosts,” and various strong exclamations,—and down came Amy, floundering out of the stair-place, regardless of aught but escape, performing a shrill finale in GG in altissimo.

A heavy fall, and Mrs. Podger was flat in a swoon on the floor. The young fry, scared out of their wits, rushed out on the terrace, shrieking “thieves,” “ghosts,” “murder,” “p’leece, p’leece !” The cat dashed about the room like mad, and finally took refuge on the top of the clock.

The Captain, who was smoking his pipe in the chimney-corner, seized a basin of water and threw it ruthlessly in his *cara sposa's* face. The bold remedy took instant effect, and the next moment he had lifted her to a chair, and was wiping her face and dress with what linen was nearest to hand.

“Why, bless us!” he cried, “this beats anything since that shell busted aboard the Hirritator in the Bay o’ Bisky.”

Meantime, the house was half-filled with the neighbours, including even Mrs. Jay and little one-armed Johnny, and a dozen voices were clattering at once.

“Go a’ter Amy, some o’ yer,” cried the resuscitated matron-bride; “mabby she’ll be vor vurring herself auver the cleeve.”

Not she. The half-dozen who scoured out in terror to save her, found her at

the pump, quietly washing her face and arms—by way, we suppose, of something to do, in shame at the rumpus she had raised.

“Well, what be ’e come about?” she said, confronting her pursuers. “’Tain’t no ghost a’ter all, I do think; but I zee’d un, as sure as these arms be a’ wetted!”

The sentiment found an echo within. Tom, the only brave member of the household, had ventured in the confusion to mount the stairs, and as soon as anything could be audible, his voice was heard.

“Come up, mother, come up, Captain, what be ’e afeard o’? Here’s Mr. Tiffin, in ’is flesh—that is, all the flesh he ever had—and welcome to un, I say, and we be glad as glad to see un.”

However, Mr. Tiffin saved them the trouble by coming down, introduced by Tom.

The Captain managed to stand where he was. Mrs. Podger retreated with her back against the dresser, and firmly held on to it with her hands, looking, in her moist estate, like *Amphitrité* outraged. The young fry, mixed up with the neighbours, tumbled one over another in hurry to get out; all but Johnny, who we suppose was too near the next world himself, poor little lad, to be afraid of a bogie.

There he was, in the ancient garb—the same braided pockets, resistless in logical argument—the same smoking-cap, the very same felt slippers, one of them down at heel. But Mrs. Podger, even in her terror, with her keen eye observed that whereas it used to be the left foot, now it was the right; and this little circumstance, partly perhaps as diverting her thoughts, partly as showing that the philosopher's figure was not stereotyped from

a former life, gave her no small comfort.

“Good-morning, Mrs. Podger—good-morning, Captain,” said the figure, with its usual courteous manner.

“Lok, zur, and how ever did ’ee come here?” was the wonderfully-collected reply.

The Captain saluted, but said nothing.

“The same way as I went, Mrs. Podger.”

“Ah, I do mind! we heeard ’ee getting out of Pak’s winder, and thought you’d breek your bones, we did; an’ Tom went and helped ’ee down; an’ so ye swarmed up dthick way last night, that was it, eh?”

“Well, ma’am, you’ve guessed it.”

“An’ why ever didn’t ’ee write an’ zay ’ee was coming, and not go for to turrify us all o’ this ’n?”

“I’ve my own way of doing things, Mrs. Podger.”

“Ay, that ye have; needn’t be turble sharp to vind out that. Howsomever, glad to zee ‘e back. And now, zur, do ‘ee make yourself comfortable, as you used to do.”

“But how about the breakfast, mother?” said Amy, who had reappeared on the scene.

“Well observed, Amy,” rejoined, to the astonishment of all, the philosopher. “Allow me, ma’am, this much of interference with your affairs. I’ve taken order for that.—If you’ll look in to-morrow, after your happy union, at the Three Jolly Captains, at Evenborough, you’ll find all prepared for *you*, Captain, to make a fourth.—And I hope, madam,” he said, with a bow which might have passed at the Tuilleries, “that you will allow me the

pleasure of giving you away at the altar, and of being a guest at your table."

Was ever anything like this? If Tiffy had come back from another world, it evidently was a very jolly world. Mrs. Podger, as if she were not wet enough already, fairly burst over with copious tears, and shook with agitation, so that the plates clattered above her.

But the "deliverance" just uttered had exhausted the philosopher's communicativeness for the present. He made one more most gracious bow to all in presence, and quietly retired to his room.

What he did there, or elsewhere, that evening, did not appear; but just as Amy was in full tide of lament about all their preparations being wasted, especially the two big pies and the cake, arrived a waiter from the Jolly Captains with a truck, to fetch anything they might have to send

down. And so that was satisfactorily arranged.

One point there was which furnished topic for eager discussion in Podgerdom that night ; and it was, in what costume the volunteer father would appear next morning. And Gulliver's Big- and Little-Endians could not have been more thoroughly divided than were the two parties in this dispute. The Captain and Mrs. Podger, being people of sober years, and knowing the ways of the world, maintained (it must be acknowledged, not without an inward misgiving) that he "would do like a gen'l'man what he had offered like a gen'l'man;" while Amy and Tom, who had never seen him out of his long dressing-gown and slippers, held that in them he would officiate at the altar-rails, and in nothing else. However, as it was a point which no arguing could settle, it

was left, when the Captain departed, just where it was; and Mrs. Podger and Amy spent part of their last night together in its warm discussion.

The morning came—one of Nature's very best. The dew sparkled, and the birds chirruped, and the mist drew up off the sea, and all was blue, and golden, and charming.

And the fly from Netherton was at the door,—that was part of the original arrangement, — and Poggeretti in their Sunday costume were rushing in and out, and all but the principal personages were on the scene.

But it was not long before they appeared. The bride — but here the pen must be laid down in despair, and only taken up again to write, that Amy had young friends discreet milliners in Netherton, and thus a spice of the knowledge

of what's what was not wanting; so that the chief get-up was not outrageous. But the bare idea of Mrs. Podger in anything presentable at a wedding was too much for sobriety.

Of Amy herself there is nothing to say that is not becoming and to her praise. She, of course, could not help the fact that the jolly face in its white-silk bonnet looked like a nosegay of scarlet geranium surrounded by variegated leaves; nor that the arms shone through their net-sleeves like two sunsets in a haze. Barring these peculiarities, or some might think because of these, she looked as blithe and buxom a lass as you would wish to see.

Bouquets of course were not wanting, chiefly made-up by juvenile Podgers, and consisting of huge "bloody warriors," double daisies, and "boy's love."

Men's costume on such occasions is ordinarily too dull a subject for words; and so it would have been on this, were it not for that one puzzle, as yet unsolved. Tom of course was ready, in his Sunday best, with his lace-ups double-polished, laces and all, and a magnificent footman's tie. But that garret-door — it had not yet opened.

Open, however, it did in due time; and when it did, yesterday's astonishment was well-nigh surpassed — without, it is true, yesterday's dismay. For the figure which emerged was no longer the quaint philosopher, but a grand gentleman, in such an array as no Podger had ever yet set eyes on: no, not the dear departed tailor, now so soon to be supplanted.

It may suffice the ordinary reader to be told that it was an entire and faultless court-suit: purple "cut-away," pro-

jecting shirt-frill (at sight of which, faded and crumpled, Mrs. P. heaved a sigh that she had not been summoned to get it up afresh), broidered waistcoat, velvet skirts, French - white silks, diamond (or what seemed diamond) knee- and shoe-buckles, and all. Nor had the sword been forgotten.

The good dame, who had in her younger days been taken to Ilminster to see some strolling-players, simply regarded the whole as having come off the stage direct, and sat as she was, wondering if it was quite the thing. Amy and the young ones involuntarily dropped their deepest curtsies, and would have gone on their knees if it had occurred to them ; while Tom, perhaps to conceal his feelings, at once went to the door, and stood with it open in his hand, face averted.

Not a word was spoken. The brilliant figure advanced, gave its arm to Mrs. Podger, and handed her to the fly, seating itself by her side. Amy and Tom followed, the former pinning a favour on the driver's coat as he stood with the fly-door in his hand. And the younger ones, as previously admonished, had scoured off for Netherton by the short cut after the first glimpse of their magnificent grand-papa of the day.

And so to the church; where they found, not the Curate, whom they expected, but the Rector himself, and with him two slight figures with whom they were well-acquainted. Among this group there was less surprise at the court-dress than might have been expected. This was duly noticed by the Captain, who, in his best uniform, and with his best man, Mr. Coles, commander of his revenue

cutter, was awaiting the party from Paradise-place at the altar-rails.

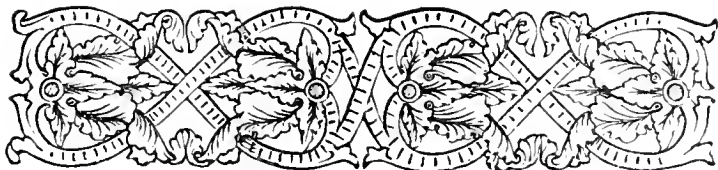
The interest of a wedding-day expires with the arrival at church. Better imagined than described are the pealing of the bells, and all the glories of the breakfast; how the big pies, splendid and redolent with "bloody warriors," did equal duty at quarter distance from the two ends; and all know, of course, what was in the middle. It might also, perhaps, be anticipated that the giver of the feast was profuse with a certain sparkling beverage never beheld before by those present, save by the Captain at the paying off of the *Hirritator*; and how, notwithstanding its novelty, the same was highly popular. The court-dress and the speech were quite in keeping; the language and sentiments were courtly, and the *facetiæ* neat, clear cut, and miles above the com-

prehension of the guests. Some things in it the Captain thought were intended for puzzles which time would solve.

And so Paradise-place received another tenant—one who would keep all merry and see all straight. And the philosopher relapsed into his *status quo*: the dressing-gown, the smoking-cap, the felt slippers with the left heel down. Till, one morning, — as they had not looked for him, and he was,—so they looked for him, and he was not. By the way that he had gone and come again, by that same he had come and gone again. The garret was once more locked up, and the key in Mrs. Davies's drawer.

“I do believe, mother,” said Amy, “that Mr. Tiffy know'd all about it, and came to see after his telescopes.”

And Amy was right.



CHAPTER XI.

A GUEST OF ANOTHER KIND.

IT was a hot sultry day. All nature seemed languishing. The great *gloire-de-Dijon* roses were hanging down their pinky-white faces from the arch in the Rectory garden, as if they were too weary to hold them up. The butterflies had settled lazily, each on his flower, and no more flew hither and thither. A solitary bumble-bee boomed heavily about in the air. The sun poured down heat through the mist-laden sky, more diffused and inevitable in his power for the vapour that intervened.

The midges seemed the only living things that had any energy left, and they revelled in the weighted atmosphere.

The two girls were lying on the turf under the shelter of a tulip-tree. They had not been idle, for books and work lay scattered about, and a sweet voice had been reading aloud in *la bella lingua*. At length it ceased, and gave place to conversation. Draw near and listen.

“That is a beautiful idea of Dante’s,” said Emmy, “that his beatified Beatrice should be able to guide him even from the depths of the Inferno up through the Purgatorio to the heights of Paradise. For she it was, you remember, who was the means of sending* Virgil to him at the first, when he lay in that lonely spot in the *gran deserto*.”

“Yes,” answered Lucy, “that’s all very grand; but the historical facts don’t quite

come up to the same mark, do they? Deliver me from ever marrying a poet ! I should feel sure that at certain times he would be penning immortal verse to some love of his youth, which would be published at my demise. And if, as has been said, Dante's passion for Beatrice began at ten years of age, one could not be sure of escaping, if one married a youth in his teens, you see."

She shrugged her pretty shoulders as she said this, and glanced archly at Emmy. But seeing that though her friend gave her a smile in return, it was a wistful one, her manner changed directly; and she said gravely,

"Whether or not we shall watch over those we love in a future state, Emmy, I have often heard you defend the practice of watchful pleadings for them while we both are here. And this belief, if, like all your

beliefs, it is in the very grain of your heart, should calm your anxiety, darling."

"No doubt it ought, Lucy," said Emmy, looking up almost pleadingly into her friend's face with her beautiful eyes, in which the dreamy, wistful expression had become habitual of late; "but I almost lose heart sometimes. I fear to think how many years it will be this very night since I last heard his voice at my window; and not one word or sign all this time."

"You have not come up to the good patriarch yet, my little saint; remember, his seven years seemed to him but a few days for the love he had to his Rachel; and here you have served only a portion of the time for your beloved, and yet it seems an age to you. I wonder, though, whether the time seemed as short to Rachel?"

"O," said Emmy, smiling in spite of

her sadness, "in those good old days, when the women watered their flocks themselves, I daresay a healthful, busy life kept them from pining overmuch. And then, you see, Jacob lived in the same place, and had a chance now and then of seeing her beautiful form pass along with her pitcher on her head; and she could know that he was alive and well, at any rate."

"O, your friend is well, rest assured of that; we should have heard if any serious ill had befallen him. I suspect his venerable star-gazing friend keeps watch and ward, and could tell us more if he pleased. But," continued Lucy, not without an arch impulse prompting her, "who is voucher for his constancy all this time?"

The ruse had its effect. The stimulus instantly did the work. The little lady sprung to her feet, another creature from the listless, weary maiden of a minute ago.

She laid her hands on Lucy's shoulders, and looked brightly and triumphantly into her face :

“Who is voucher for his constancy? Why, one who never will summon him to an audit: one who will hardly be a voucher for your soundness of mind who have asked so preposterous a question! You dear little infidel, why, if you disbelieve him, you must disbelieve everything, — truth, and Scripture, and all the rest! Voucher for his constancy, indeed!”

And the glistening tears, in spite of the well-acted banter, swelled under the long lashes, as she turned away and gazed on the old church-tower to hide them from her friend.

“A thousand pardons, my Emmy,” said Lucy; “I had no idea you felt like this about it. You keep your feelings so safe under lock and key, that one can only

guess at them, and then doesn't half believe one's own guesses. I often wondered why you were so hard-hearted to your many admirers; but now I see how deep the old affection lies. Well-a-day! what would poor Gerald say if he knew that the rival who sent him packing to the wilds of Australia was a hero minus hose, and without a suspicion of lavender kids?"

Poor Emmy could not help smiling through her tears at Lucy's comical way of contrasting the two.

"Gerald knew that I loved one of my own class," she said; "I had hoped that would have cured him long ago, and so I believe it did, for all his poor mother's convictions to the contrary."

"What a queer world it is!" said Lucy thoughtfully. "Who would have believed that Aunt Kate, so proud and self-contained

in olden days, who stipulated that her *protégée* should be kept away from the grand Mr. Gerald, lest the poor little thing might ensnare him, should have come at last to entreat this same little person to take pity on her poor boy, and condescend to become his wife? Truly the furnace of affliction works wonders!" added the young lady, more gravely than was her wont.

"Is that my merry little daughter talking of the furnace of affliction?" asked a cheery voice close by; and the kind bright face of the Colonel appeared under the branches.

Here was another instance of constancy and devotion. Lucy too had her admirers, but she had always chaffed them away before they attempted any serious proposition, and kept faithful to her "dear old man," as she called him; professing to Emmy and to him that she had been so long used to

him, that she was spoiled for any inferior article.

“I have brought the carriage to take you girls home with me,” he said; “so pack up your traps, Miss Emmy, and let us be off.”

The girls looked at him in amazement at this unexpected summons.

“I don’t think Aunt Kate can spare me just now,” said Emmy; “there are so many sick in the parish.”

“That’s just it, my child,” answered the Colonel; “she wants to get you out of it.”

“But I’m not ill myself, nor afraid of sickness; why should I leave my duties?”

“A little change does everybody good; you will come back all the brisker to them. Come, be quick; I’m going to order the horses round.”

Thus the good man escaped farther

questioning, being only anxious to get his young charges off. But Emmy was not satisfied: and seeing the gardener passing by with a dejected air, she stopped him to ask after a sick child of his, and hearing she was no worse, farther questioned him as to whether there were any more persons ailing near him, and why he looked so sad.

“It’s most enough to make anybody look downhearted, miss, I think, to hear of this awful plague that’s come among us, hanging over our heads like yon mist up in the sky, and no breath o’ wind to blow it away.”

Poor Roger, he had a most awe-struck face. The girls were awed by his look and manner, as much as by his words.

“What is the plague you speak of, and who has been attacked by it, Roger?” asked Emmy in a quiet, firm voice, to reassure the poor terror-stricken man.

“It’s the cholera, miss, if you must know,” he answered in a hoarse whisper. “John Tully was stricken wi’t yestereven, and he died this morning; an’ they’re going to bury him private like to-night, I heeard the parson say, not to alarm other folks;” and the poor man shuddered as he spoke.

Emmy went up to him and said in her calm clear voice, “Roger, you must not let your mind dwell on these things. John was a good man, and is safe in God’s keeping. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart. Think of those words, Roger; and rest here in the shade, while I go and get you something.”

Roger obeyed, and Emmy, really alarmed about him, was hastening on her errand, when, turning round, she saw Lucy leaning against the tree, her cheeks and lips, generally so rosy red, turned to ashy white.

The merry, light-hearted Lucy, never daunted in riding, boating, and the like, was now quite unnerved and powerless, while the gentle Emmy, naturally timid, stood firm and helpful, all the listlessness gone from her eyes, and succeeded by a clear calm light, that bespoke her ready to do and dare to the utmost.

Her quiet fearlessness helped somewhat to rally poor Lucy, who roused herself sufficiently to reach her father's carriage. Emmy bid them a hasty farewell, begging the Colonel privately to keep Lucy carefully from all communication with the tainted town. This done, she went up into her little room, and kneeling down, as was her wont, at the latticed window, looking across to the churchyard, where the sexton was already preparing the grave for the first victim of the pestilence, she pleaded earnestly to be upheld and blessed in

the work to which in that great Presence she devoted herself.

When she came down to the parlour, she found Aunt Kate standing statue-like before the window, her hands locked together and her eyes fixed, as if spell-bound, on the opposite churchyard-gate.

“I thought you were gone, Emmy; but I am glad to see you once more, child. They may be digging my grave next, and I wanted to tell you how sorry I have long been for all my hardness to you and to others. I am a weak, wicked creature; but the prodigal was saved, and there’s hope for me too. You must write and tell Gerald of all my love for him, and give him his poor mother’s blessing.”

Emmy, overpowered with grief and apprehension, threw herself into her arms, and began pouring out a torrent of loving words. But Mrs. Bythesea pushed her

away almost roughly. "Don't touch me, child: I am stricken, and shall taint you with the disease;" and she fell exhausted into a low chair beside her. Emmy, now thoroughly alarmed, was hurrying off, as she said, to fetch the Rector. But his poor wife sternly forbade her.

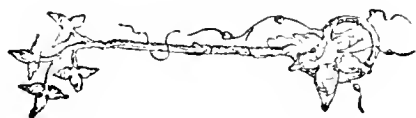
"Would you have my husband die too?" she exclaimed; "have I been so sweet a wife that he should long to end his days with mine?"

"That indeed might be, wife, were times and seasons in our own hands," said the Rector's gentle voice at the door; but he got no response save a feeble smile.

The faithful doctor was instantly sent for, and arrived in hot haste; but it was one of those cases, happily not frequent, but still by no means unexampled in the history of our cholera periods, when the disease had suddenly seized its victim, and had counted

its progress by minutes. The state of collapse had already set in, and all Dr. Resp's remedies and kind sympathies were of no avail. The Rector and Emmy watched her lovingly all night, and at the first still break of morning her spirit passed away.

Just as Emmy stole from the room, leaving the Rector alone with his grief, an urgent message reached her from poor Roger, who himself was struck down by the same dread foe.





CHAPTER XII.

THE FRUIT OF SORROW.

THE Rector stood like a man stunned at his library-window, gazing at the churchyard opposite, where before nightfall the body of his wife was to be laid. He could not realise it, so sudden had been the blow; but the shock seemed to have aged him many years. And as he stood there, he would shake his head impatiently from time to time, thinking to throw off the nightmare that was upon him. Surely he was dreaming, or his mind had gone deranged.

While he was standing thus, wondering

what had come over him, the door opened, and Emmy, cloaked and bonneted, stole gently to his side.

It was early morning, and neither had slept all night. The bright beams of the rising sun slanted into the undusted room, which had not been tended since the previous afternoon, all the household having been too preoccupied and panic-struck to think of closing shutters. Now, those who could sleep were doing so, and the morning songs of the birds were the only sounds to be heard in the death-stricken house.

“Dear uncle,” said Emmy, “I am come to ask you to give me a bottle of brandy. Poor Roger is ill, you know, and has sent for me; and the doctor advises me to bring what cordials are necessary with me, as he says they have nothing they want in the house, and all their wits are frightened out of them, poor things.”

“There’s the key of the cellaret,” answered the Rector absently; “take what you want.”

The dull hopeless way in which this was said fell chill on Emmy’s heart: she could not leave him thus.

“Uncle,” she said, “I hope Roger won’t die too. Shall I send you word how he is?”

“Roger die? My gardener die? Why should he? What’s the matter, Emmy? I have had a hideous dream,” he said, passing his hand wearily over his eyes.

“It’s not a dream,” she said as calmly as she could; “it is all true. Aunt Kate is dead, and Roger, I fear, dying. We must bestir ourselves, dear uncle, must we not?”

The good man brought his eyes round now from their absent gaze on the churchyard to the fragile-looking figure at his

side, all ready equipped for work. He noted the flushed cheek and bright eyes, and they recalled him to a sense of the present emergency.

“Emmy, my child,” he said in a choking tone of voice, “you are not going to leave me too. You must not think of thrusting yourself into danger. Go and rest now, and, after to-night’s work is done,” glancing back at the churchyard, “I will take you off somewhere to a place free from infection.”

“I had rather stay here with the poor people. Please let me,” she pleaded. “I have no fear for myself, and Roger has sent for me. If infection could give me the disease, I must have taken it already. You would not turn me from what I feel my duty?”

“You are right, child,” said the good Rector. “Why was she taken, and we

left, but because there was yet work for us to do? I will go with you, Emmy. Roger may want ghostly counsel as well as bodily help."

So they went together. And not only to Roger's bedside, nor on that day only, but on many another; and wherever the dreaded visitant appeared, there would the bowed, gray-headed man and the gentle-handed, low-voiced maiden appear too, unremitting in their care and watchfulness, soothing many a deathbed, cheering many a widow and orphan, and nursing not a few back into convalescence again. The Rector came out nobly in the time of trial; throwing off his own trouble, and devoting himself to his Master's work.

As for Emmy, she won all hearts, and kept up wonderfully under her almost incessant labours. Good Dr. Resp would shake his head ominously at times, and

say that the tension was too great, that she would "go down with a run" some day, if they didn't take care. And as he could not speak highly enough of his young assistant, it was evidently a cause of anxiety to him. He confided his fears to the Colonel and Lucy, and they tried their utmost to get Emmy to take care of herself. But she always told them with a smile, that when the work was done, she would rest. Meanwhile there was something more on her mind to cause the flushed cheeks than either these friends or the doctor knew.

Several had died, Roger and others had recovered; and the disease, which was very partial in its visitations, seemed nearly to have spent itself in that quarter of the town which was near the Rectory.

It was Sunday, and Emmy had just returned from the morning service. A try-

ing one it had been, for the large parish church was nearly empty, owing to the dread people had of that infected neighbourhood. So the sun streamed brightly through the stained-glass windows, showering all manner of lovely colours on the empty seats and idle books.

The poor widower had fairly broken down in his sermon. The vacant place which had been regularly filled for the last thirty years was full in sight, and had proved too much for his feelings. He stopped short in his discourse, and the congregation quietly and reverently stole out of the church, Emmy among the number, lingering on her way for the Rector to join her.

“Who’d a thought, now, that he’d a took on so at losing madam?” she heard a familiar voice say close to her; “but then, to be sure, ’twas turble sudden; an’

folks do miss them as they're got accustomed to, anyhow."

"Amy," answered a reproving voice, which was easily recognised as her mother's, "for shame, to speak so of them as is gone! You do talk like a giddy girl as you are, though you're old enough to know better. Sure enough, I've had my say out in my time with madam; but I've had reason to know since that she was much better at heart than she let us guess. And many's the kind thing I've heard of her doing these three or four years past. I s'pose she thought it a duty like to speak out all her mind."

Here the conversation was stopped by a shabby-looking man, who came rushing out of breath through the churchyard-gate, and begged the woman to tell him where he could find the clergyman, and the young lady who went about nursing people.

Emmy stepped forward immediately, and asked if anyone else was ill—she was ready to come at once.

“O, thank you, miss,” gasped the agitated man, who was ashy pale, and shaking like an aspen-leaf, “my old woman, she’s took awful bad; and I haven’t been as good a husband to her as I might a been; and now her cry is that she’s got summat on her mind, and she wants to see the parson. O dear, O dear, if I’m took next, who can I go to, an old sinner like me?”

And the man wrung his hands in agony.

“I think you’d better go home with the Rector and talk to him of your troubles,” said Emmy; “you are not in a fit state to be with your wife now. I’ll go to her at once; and when you have had your dinner, you can come on with Mr. Bythesea.”

So having ascertained from the poor man the way to his abode, and seeing the Rector coming down the pathway, Emmy hurried off on her errand of mercy, feeling sure that having to minister to the wants of a fellow-sufferer would do more to arouse the poor widower than her society could.

END OF VOL. II.

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